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The Pharisees

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Sermons of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - MLJ Trust

Luke 16:14-15 — Why was Jesus opposed to the Pharisees? In the gospels, no one is condemned more by the Lord Jesus than the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees. Throughout the gospels, they oppose Jesus and seek to trap Him in His words. In this sermon on Luke 16:14–15 titled “The Pharisees,” Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains that eventually the Pharisees—with the help of the Romans—crucify Him. Jesus condemned them because they claimed to follow the law of Moses and the prophets, yet they were religious hypocrites who loved public praise and recognition. Jesus condemned them because they claimed to be experts in the law and not only added their own traditions to the law of Moses, but they opposed Jesus, who is the fulfillment of the law. They pretended to be holy and righteous, yet they were dead on the inside. Dr. Lloyd-Jones proclaims that there are many today in the church just like the Pharisees. They are self-righteous hypocrites who love to be thought of as holy but do not believe in the gospel, and they trust in their own works for salvation. This false righteousness that is only concerned with looking good is condemned by Jesus because the true righteousness of the kingdom of God comes not by anything one does. It comes by Christ Jesus who is the righteousness for all who believe.

Transcript

Evening at the be found in the Gospel according to St. Luke. In the 16th chapter verses 14 and 50, verses 14 and 50, in the 16th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him.

And He said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is abominational in the sight of God. The Pharisees also were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Once more, we are looking at these characters, these people who appear so prominently in the records of the four Gospels, the people who are known as the Pharisees and the scribe. You can't read the four Gospels without being impressed by their whole state and condition. Some of the severest things that our blessed Lord ever said were said about these people.

Here they are, they are living in the same land as all others, and they hear about this teacher who suddenly has appeared. And at first they crowd out to see Him and to listen to Him. They were motivated by a kind of curiosity probably, anxious to see Him, anxious to hear Him.

Who was this fellow? He hadn't been to their schools, he was a carpenter, but he seemed to be saying and doing strange things, and the people were crowding after Him, so they go out to see. But they always sat back, you remember, they were spectators, they sat as it were as onlookers. But they did go, and at first they seemed to be more or less interested and attracted, and then they became suspicious, and they began to question Him.

And to argue with Him, they tried to trip Him with their catch questions in order to make Him contradict Himself, or in order to make Him say something which would bring Him into trouble with the authorities. And then they began to show their active venom and their heart antagonism. And in the end it was they who plotted together, you remember, to encompass His death.

And from the human angle alone were the people who were most responsible for the death of our blessed Lord and Savior. In other words, these Pharisees and scribes stand out as the most tragic people in the whole Bible. There they are face to face with this blessed Son of God, the Savior of the world.

And yet this is the term you will, they derided Him. They dismissed Him. They regarded Him with contempt.

They had no use for Him at all. And as I say, it was because of that, that our Lord eventually pronounced those terrible words upon them, which you will find recorded in the twenty-third chapter of the gospel, according to Saint Matthew. Now I'm calling your attention to these people, because the situation is still the same.

We are not interested in these matters merely from some theoretical or academic standpoint. Why not never tired of saying this? The times in which we are living are so urgent and they're so cruel. We can't afford just to have theoretical interests or to adopt a daily, tanty kind of attitude.

My only reason for calling attention to these people and what we are told about them in the scriptures is that there are so many people who are in precisely the same position at

this present time. They treat the Son of God with their vision. They are not interested in Him.

They deride Him. They dismiss Him exactly as these people did so long ago. Now I feel, therefore, that it is of vital importance to us to consider them and to consider what our Lord says in various places about them and what we are told about them in the gospels.

And in this particular verse, this fifteenth verse in particular, which we are looking at this evening, we have what I think we can safely describe as our Lord's final analysis of these people. We've considered other things that He has to say about them. This is the final thing.

Here we come rarely to the root cause of all their other troubles. Here is the ultimate explanation of their derision and their rejection of Him. I don't know what you feel, but I know of no verse in the whole scripture that is a more accurate description of the typical average modern person than just this very verse.

Here they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hopes for that which is highly esteemed among men is a bombing nation in the sight of God. I know of no verse that speaks more directly to the modern men than just this verse. It is such a perfect word to so many in this world this evening.

What kind of people am I thinking of? Well, let me tell you. I'm thinking of a large numbers of people who are not Christians and who tell you quite frankly and quite openly that they are not Christians and that they have no use for Christianity. They never go to a place of worship, they're not interested in it.

They regard that as very old fashion, very out of date, something quite out murdered. They make no pretense to being religious at all or in any shape or form, but they're good people. And when I say that they're good people, I mean this, that they're highly moral, they're very respectable, they do a great deal of good.

They've got a high standard of morality and of ethics in their personal lives and in their business dealings and more than that. They go out of their way to do good to others and to help others. They believe in helping mankind and the uplift of the race and so on and so forth.

Now there are millions of such people in the world tonight. They never come to be at a place of worship, but we mustn't say for that reason that they're living as it were in the dregs of sin, not at all. They're good citizens, they pay their debts, they avoid the gross, open, ugly forms of sin.

And as I say, they're very good and they're very moral. There are thousands, millions of such people in the world tonight, but they deride the Lord Jesus Christ. They have no interest in Him.

They don't hear about Him. They're irritated by talk about Him. They feel that they're perfectly all right without Him.

You see, they're in the exact position of these fairy seasons, scribes, a vote. But unfortunately, I fear it is the simple truth to say that these people are not only found outside the church. Are there not such people within the church also? Because you see, it is possible to be highly religious and still to be like this and to conform to this description.

There are many who are troubled and offended by certain aspects of the Christian faith, even though they do attend places of worship. They're interested in the life of Christ and in His teaching. But if you begin to talk about His blood, they become irritated and they begin to show their division.

They're interested in Him only until He goes to the cross and they see no meaning in that yet. They don't like this talk about being born again and the absolute necessity of it and that we are lost and that we are sinners. They resent that.

They feel that that's insulting because they've always been good people and have always gone to a place of worship. They see no need to be regarded as sinners or to regard themselves as sinners. Very well, they obviously belong to precisely the same category.

So you see that this description is a very comprehensive one. And here in this astonishing statement, our Lord makes an analysis of these very people. It is always to me a matter of great interest to notice.

The people who are unconscious Pharisees. Nobody likes to be called a Pharisee. Everybody's agreed in denouncing the Pharisees and scribes of the New Testament.

And yet, so how often is that done by people who are typical Pharisees and scribes themselves? You see, those people outside the church would say, well, we can't be Pharisees because we're making no provision. But you see, what makes one a Pharisee is not to make a profession. What makes one a Pharisee is to deride Christ and to see no need of Him.

So whoever is in that position is a Pharisee. Whatever may be true about us in other senses and in other respects. Now here I say, our Lord gives His final analysis of these people and of this attitude.

And as we read it, we cannot be impressed by the force and the strength of His language. Did you notice what He said? He said that which is highly esteemed among men is a bombing nation in the sight of God. What strong language? What a powerful term to you.

Well, I say it is but the introduction, the prelude as it were to those terrible words that He pronounced upon them just a little risk, His final sense of hopelessness with respect to them. Indeed, we can say this, there is no class, there is no body of people in the New Testament that are regarded as utterly and finally hopeless, save this type of person. We saw last Sunday night that there is an abundant hope for the public and in the sinner.

Our Lord said to these self-same Pharisees a bit later on that they had rejected the preaching of John the Baptist and his preaching, but he says the harlots and the sinners are crowding into the kingdom. Indeed, we get the self-same thing here. You remember, he said the law and the prophets were until John since that time the kingdom of God is preached and every man presses into it, but not these people.

Now they are the only people who are finally hopeless and that is what makes this theme such an important one for us all. This is the thing that finally keeps one outside the kingdom of God. This is the thing that finally leads to hell, to have the attitude, the spirit of a Pharisee.

This thing which makes people deride the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, what's wrong with it? Well, let me put our Lord's analysis to you. He puts it, you notice, under three main headings.

The first thing that he tells us about these people is that they have the wrong standard. Yee are there, he says, which justify yourselves, the form men, but God, you see, they've got a wrong standard. They start in the wrong position.

Now this is, of course, of the very essence of their trouble. The Pharisees and scribes, as I've reminded you, were very religious men. They were the religious teachers.

They were men who were regarded by others and revered by others as holy men of God. They set themselves up as such and they were accepted as such by the common people. The Pharisee was regarded as a menapart, indeed the very name, which he uses, suggests a separatist in that sense because he believed that he was a holy man and a teacher.

And yet you see that our Lord says that all they had and all they were was not only wrong and useless, but an abummy nation in the sight of God. This is, I say, the most amazing thing that our Lord ever said. Well, what was the matter with them, you say? Well, I say it was this.

They were simply conforming to a human standard. That's the operative word here. Are they the justify yourselves, the form men? The standard is absolutely wrong from beginning to end.

It was their own standard. Now our Lord deals with this at great length in the Sermon on the Mount. Recorded, you remember, in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the Gospel according to

Saint Matthew.

That's the whole point of that great Sermon. It was just to show that these people had been setting up their own standard instead of God's standard. And because of that they were satisfied with it and they satisfied others.

They believed they were good, they were righteous, they were holy. Everybody else believed it about them. And yet our Lord says it's abummy nation in the sight of God.

Why? Well, it isn't God's standard. Now I read to you at the beginning that portion from the 10th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans because the Apostle works out the self-same argument just there. He's talking about his fellow countrymen, the Jewels.

He says that he's got a continual heaviness and sorrow in his heart for his countrymen. What's the matter? Well, he says, I bear them record that they have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge, for they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. It's the same thing.

You see, the tragedy of these Pharisees was that they set up their own standard and because they conformed to that they thought that all was well and they persuaded others that all was well. But the whole time it's quite wrong, it's utterly useless. Indeed, it is abummy nation in the sight of God.

Well, now my suggestion this evening is that this is the perfect description of so many of men and women at this present time and it has been increasingly the trouble for the last hundred years. Why is it, I ask, that the masses are outside the Christian Church? Why is it that the vast majority of men and women in this country are not doing what you were doing at this moment? What's the explanation of it? Why is it that they're not at all interested in Jesus Christ and is coming into this world and his death upon a cross? Their attitude is, I couldn't care less. Though their world is as it is this evening and though this confronts them, they're not a bit interested.

They smile at it, they curl up their lips and they're rather sorry for those who are still interested in some stuff and so on. It's dismissed with derision and with sarcasm and Christ, the name is only used as an oath, as a curse or as an epithet of abuse. What's the matter? Well, you know, there's really no explanation but this very explanation that our Lord gives here.

They are living according to a standard that they've set up themselves and they think that that is perfectly right, that it's absolutely sufficient and that nothing more can be desired. You see, everybody's got a standard. There is nobody in the world but that he or she has got some standard.

Do you know anybody outside the Christian who doesn't always justify himself? Have you

ever found a man or a woman really to admit that they're all wrong? No, no, they put up a marvelous case. It's the other person. There's nobody that I know who cannot try to justify himself.

Everybody's got his standard, everybody has got his kind of code. There is such a thing as even honor among thieves. There are certain things they won't do.

There's a kind of code that runs amongst them. They don't rob one another and to rob one another is a terrible thing in their sight. They'd be horrified that a man who does that sort of thing.

They'd say, he's a cab. He's let the side down. He isn't true.

You see, everybody has a standard. Yes, but the question is, what is the standard? Who's standard, is it? It doesn't matter how high the standard is, how low the standard is. All men have got their standard.

They've got their ideas and they've got their codes and their system. Some I say are very low, but others are very high. There are great philosophies.

There are systems of thought. There are codes of morality and of ethics. There are people who don't put it perhaps in as formal a way as that, but they're very concerned about these things, the honor of a gentleman.

Certain things which a gentleman doesn't do and other things which every gentleman always does, and they'd sooner die than break that code. That's what they believe in and they believe in it with all their being and they live up to it. It's their standard and it may be a very high one as I say.

There is great idealism amongst many people and moral elevation, but you notice what our Lord says? He isn't merely talking about those with a low standard. He's talking about those with the highest standard conceivable. He says that which is highly esteemed amongst men is a bummy nation in the sight of God.

What he says in other words is this, that the highest view of life held by men tonight outside this book is an abummy nation to God. Now that's a very startling and the very striking statement. And you notice that our Lord says that the reason for it is this, that it is the wrong standard.

It isn't the standard that God has given. My dear friend, what matters first and foremost is not the sort of life you're living. It's no part of the preaching of the gospel to criticize that.

Let me grant you this. You tonight listening to me who are not a Christian, you may be a very much better person, as Judge from Shek, conduct the many who call themselves

Christians, I'll grant you that. But you see, that doesn't solve any problem, that doesn't answer any question at all.

For the vital question is the question of standard. Whose standard are you conforming to? According to what ideas are you living? The ultimate question, you know, really comes down to this. It's the question of authority.

And in the last analysis, there are only two possible standards and two possible authorities. We either take our authority and our ascension and our standard from this book, or else we take it from men. There's no other possible alternative.

It's just that every other system, I don't care as I say whether they're high or low, whether they're philosophical or ignorant, they're all of them are in the same compartment. They belong to men. And we all of us are basing our total view of life tonight on one of those two things.

I either take a human standard, my own, another means what I read in books, what I read in newspapers, or else I take it from this book. This book claims to be a revelation from God. It doesn't offer itself to us as men's opinion or as men's standard.

This is a book which says thus saith the Lord. The Lord God called Moses up to a mountain and addressed him and spoke to him and gave him ten commandments. Moses never said that he'd thought them out.

He said I received them from God and it's the same with all the book. It's a revelation from God. So you see it, the question rarely becomes as simple as this.

As I think of myself and of my life in this world and of my death and my future, do I come to conclusions? Do I make my assessment entirely in terms of this? Or is it what I think and what others think? Do I come to this and say very well, I recognize that that is the Word of God, the Word of the Lord, and whatever I may think and others may think, I'm going to submit myself to that. Is it God? Is it myself? Is it men? Yee, are they the justify yourselves before men. Isn't that what they're all doing tonight? They say, of course, there's no need to go to a place of worship.

There's no need to go together to worship God on Sunday. No, no, they say, all that sort of thing, of course, belongs to the past. It's not really necessary.

They say, there's no need to believe this theology about Jesus Christ as the Son of God, born of the Virgin with two natures in one person and that when he died on the tree, God was there punishing sin, your opponent and thing. No, no, they say it's unnecessary. All that is necessary, they tell us is this, is that you live your curve, that you can live up to your standard, that you're a good man and an honest man and a moral man and a kind man and a philanthropic person and an idealist.

They say that's all and nothing else is necessary and it's as good to spend your day at home reading Sunday newspapers if you happen to have them or reading something else or listening to a wireless, looking at the television, ah, they say, all this belongs to the infancy of the human race and they believe it and they're happy about it and they're confident they justify the life they're living, they satisfy themselves, they satisfy others. Isn't that the position? And what God has said is not even considered. It's not considered at all.

As the Pharisees erected their own system, the modern man is doing the same. Oh, how surprised he'd be if he thought that he was a Pharisee, but you see he's in the identical position. The essence of the Pharisee's equal position is that you put up man's standard instead of God's standard.

That's the first trouble. Let me hurry to the second. The second thing our Lord tells us about these people is that they are ignorant of God's standard.

They set up their own and very largely because they're ignorant of God's. Year they which justify yourselves before men but God. Knoweth your hearts and there you see we are face to face with this great and striking contrast at once.

Their sighs suppose was the ultimate tragedy of the Pharisees that they in their blindness and in their sin really did think that they were concerned about God's righteousness but they were not. They were establishing their own and they had substituted God's by their own. Their own interpretation was given the place of God's word and thus they went astray and led others astray with them.

And that of course is why the Pharisees rejected Christ. They had never seen God's standard and my friend let me put it as plainly and as bluntly and as simply as this. There is only one final explanation why people do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and it's this.

They have never realized God's standard. It's the only reason there is no other. If any person ever realizes who and what God is and his relationship to him I will guarantee you that such a person will lie to Christ.

People don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because they don't see any need of him. If they saw any need of him they very soon availed themselves on him. People always go for that which they need and that which they want.

If people are in a house on fire and you produce a fire escape you won't need to persuade them to rush to it and to get down it. No, no. If an ends desperately ill and you say no there's a new drug that cures that it's very expensive.

He says I don't care what it costs. I'll pawn my last position. I must have it if it'll cure me.

When an end realize his need he'll jump at the remedy. And there's only one final explanation of why people don't believe in Christ. They have never seen the need of Christ and that's because they've never realized the nature of God's holy and eternal standard.

And you see this is the preaching of the gospel. It starts with the law. We've got to see our need.

Oh, not merely a need to be delivered from some particular trouble or some particular problem, but my need face to face with God's demands and God's standard. What is it? Well, here it is. God seeth the heart.

And here we are given our Lord's exposition of sin. What is God's standard? Well, let me put it to you like this. It is not something he tells us that interested only in the external appearance.

It is interested in the inner life within. Oh, do you remember our Lord? Put it in a picture one day to these Pharisees and scribes. He said, you know, you are those who clean the outside of the cup and the platter.

But the inside is full of ravening and of wickedness. It's like a person who simply washes the outside of a teacup and never washes the inside. And they polished the outside and how marvelous it looks.

And then you look inside the cup and you find the dregs of many cups of tea. It's filthy. But that was the tragedy of the Pharisees.

They were concerned about external appearances. They used to stand on the street corners. They were so holy they couldn't wait until they got to the synagogue.

They had to pray on the street corner. They stood right in the front in the synagogue, you remember. And everybody saw them.

How holy everybody said. And the Pharisees said the same thing about himself. He was interested in external appearances.

And this type of person is always interested in the external, the respectability, the appearance. How friendly they look. Look at them at the dinner or at some great civic occasion.

How they like one another. How friendly they appear to be, are they? They're hypocrisy of it all. Interested in external.

We talk about our high standards. But you get to know these people behind the scenes, listen to their secrets. The men they're shaking hands with so affably so delighted to see him.

He's a rival. He's someone who's a danger. And they'll whisper something through the corner of their mouth to you, even as they're looking at him.

It's interested in externals and in appearances. The brightness and the joviality and the happiness of the world. You'll read it in the social gossip in the newspapers.

You get it in your books. How marvellous the world seems. Argh.

But it's only the outside of the cup and the platter. Their inward thoughts are full of ravening and of wickedness, the Pharisee. Argh.

But our Lord, you see, is concerned about the heart. God sees you at the heart. Yes, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, the word of God is quick and powerful and is able to divide even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow.

And it is is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. The Almighty God sees you inside as well as outside and nothing is hidden from the eyes of him with whom we have to do, but all things are naked and open. That's God's standard.

But wait, let me go on. God is interested not only in actions but in motives. God isn't interested only in what we do, but he is much more interested in why we do it.

Again, our Lord puts it to the Pharisees in this way. He says, you people do your arms in order to be seen of men. They were kind to the poor, they gave arms to the poor.

Yes, and they were always very careful to do it in such a way that it was seen. The real motive you see was not to help the poor, it was to get the praise of men. And some of them fasted, they were such good people, yes, but they disfigured their faces in order that they might look as men who were suffering greatly in their fasting.

And so on with their prayers, to be seen of men. God isn't interested only in the action, but in the motive behind the action. The reason for the action on the world today seems to be full of good works and people are marvelous and sacrifice themselves, but the question is why are they doing it? What is their motive? What is their reason? Oh, how easy it is to fool men.

How easy to prepare, wonderful to fool men, but God knows your hearts, he knows your secret thought that twins of pride, that self satisfaction that you get. He knows all about it and he's as interested in that. As in the thing you've done, but let me go on.

He's not only interested in deeds, he is interested in desires. You see the thoughts and intents of the heart. You remember how he puts it in the Sermon on the Mount, these people who said, we've never committed adultery.

He said, who so ever looketh on a woman to lust with her earth, committed adultery in

his heart? That's God's standard? The mere fact that you can say, I've never done that. Doesn't mean that you're not guilty of it. You've done it in your heart and that God is as reprehensible as the very action of the fact itself.

You may not have committed actual murder, he says to these people, but oh, how many people have you murdered in your heart. How many people have you murdered with your tongues and in your spirit, it's ranked murder. You've said, oh, you've hated your curse, you've destroyed in spirit.

God is not only interested in actions and deeds, he is interested in desires, but to put it in a phrase, let me put it like this. The whole of the teaching of the New Testament is this, that what matters is our relationship to God. It isn't just the question of doing good or not doing sins, it's my relationship to God, that's God's test.

Of course, life is important, morality is essential, and my deeds do matter and they do count, of course, but you know, these are only indications of my relationship to God. That's the thing God's concerned about. God has made us for himself, he's made us for companionship and fellowship with himself, and what God's interested in, he's not what I do, but what I think of him and my relationship to him.

And he's told me what he expects of me. Nobody can be in ignorance about this. You remember the men who went to our Lord one afternoon with what he thought was a catch question? And he said, Master, which is the first and the greatest commendment of the law? You see, there was 613 of them, and this man, he knew it was a great question of argument and disputation amongst the Pharisees and scribes and lawyers.

He thought, well, now they'll hear what he says about this, which is the first and the greatest. He never expected the answer he got. If he had, he would never have asked this question.

This was the reply, I shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy soul and all thy strength. That is the first and the greatest commendment. And the second is likened to it.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. That's God's standard, my friend. Did you come into this building feeling that you were not a sinner? Have you ever resented being told that you were a sinner that you're a very hopeless sinner? Did that seem to you to be insulting? Did you say, well, I'm not conscious of this.

I've never done any wrong. I've never been guilty of these things. I've always done my best.

Have you resented the biblical suggestion that you were a sinner? Well, if you have until tonight, I don't think you ever will again, will you? Because this is what God asks of you and of me and of everybody. Thou shalt love, learn, not simply do certain things. Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, complete totalitarian.

And all thy soul, and all thy mind, and all thy strength. Are you doing it? Can you say that you've done it? Is the whole of your being loving God without any reservation? If it isn't, you're a vile sinner. You hopelessly fail to reach the standard.

What's the standard? Nothing less. Every other standard you mention to me is a standard of men. You're justifying yourselves before men.

That's what God asks. This is God's own law. It comes from the mouth of his only begotten son.

That is what God demands of every one of us. And I don't care whether you've been guilty of adultery or murder or not. If you hadn't loved God like that, you're as much a sinner as the adulterer and the murderer.

Because that is God's standard and nothing else. It isn't mere actions. It's the whole total state of your heart relative to God.

And the trouble with these Pharisees as it is with their modern counterparts is that they'd never realized that. They set up their own standard, their ignorant of God's standard, and lastly for me to close. This attitude doesn't realize that what is perfect according to each standard is a domination according to God's standard.

But surely, this can't be a domination. Surely, you are not going to tell me that a man who spends his life in reading the philosophers in order to extract the highest and the noblest and best ideas with regard to life and living and who rarely does his utmost to put them into practice. A man who doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he gives his goods to the poor, he spends his life in doing good and in helping others and in elevating noble thought.

Surely, you say you can't call a man like that. An abomination in the sight of God. Well, the son of God does.

And I can tell you why. He is an abomination in the sight of God for this good reason. That what he is guilty of, his attitude is the very essence of sin.

God hates sin. God abominates sin. God is of pure arise even than to look upon sin.

He can have no dealings with him with it. It is utterly abhorrent to him. And the very essence of sin is this position of the Pharisee.

You see, it was the position of the devil. It's pride. It's self-sufficiency.

It is rebellion against God. It is ultimately a hatred of God. I am going to show you in a few words that this attitude towards God is the greatest insult that one can ever offer to

God.

It insults him everywhere. Because it doesn't seek to glorify him always and in everything. How does this attitude insult God? Well, listen.

It insults him in the first place because it disputes his lordship and his majesty. It doesn't submit to God and his standard. It doesn't even submit to his writers, the law-giver, and as the one who has the right to lay down the terms and the conditions.

It does the very thing that the devil did at the beginning. He raised himself against God. He says, now God says that I say.

And you remember how he tempted men at the first. Half God said, what writers got to say. Don't listen to him.

Listen to me. Set up your own standard. Why should God dictate? And my dear friend, it comes to this.

If your view of life is not based on this book, the Bible, that is your position. You are setting up your idea, your opinion, the opinion of men as against God's opinion. That's all.

And that is the greatest insult you can ever offer to God. You are insulting his lordship, his majesty. God does the eternal law-giver.

But wait, you are also insulting his greatness and his power. You are insulting God by suggesting that he will not and he cannot do. What he has said so plainly, he will do.

You confront the modern men with the Bible in God's law and he'll smile at you and he'll say, I am not to be frightened by that sort of thing. He doesn't care. Who is God he asks? This is my view.

This is what I think. This is what I say. And he's defying the almighty God.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. The fool has said in his heart there is no God. He sets himself up and he defies whatever God's may be.

Can't you see the insult involved in it? Can't you see why it's a domination in the sight of God? That men try to brush God aside in spite of his eternal greatness. But you see, they insult his holiness in exactly the same way, in this way. A man who says that his efforts are good enough to bring him to the presence of God is insulting God's holiness.

He says, what I say is this, as long as the man does do his best and so on, nothing more can be required. And he can only say that because he's ignorant of God's holiness. He doesn't realize that God is light and that in him is no darkness at all.

He doesn't realize that you can't mix sin with God's unoperable holiness and absolute perfection. He insults God's majesty. He insults God's power.

He insults God's holiness. He insults God's grace and love and mercy and compassion because he sees no need of it. The self-sufficient modern man doesn't believe in the death of Christ on the cross because it's unnecessary.

He doesn't need any help. He's doing it all himself. He's such a good man and it's an insult to him to tell him that he's a sinner who needs to be saved.

And what he's really doing is this. He's hurling God's gift back into the face of God. He's deriding it.

Is it surprising that our Lord talks about it as an abomination in the sight of God? But oh, let me put it in one word. I'll tell you why this attitude is an abomination in the sight of God at its best and highest. In its most noble, good pagan, in its greatest philanthropist in the world of his moment, I'll tell you why God regards it as an abomination, as something vile and foul.

It's because it dismisses. He's only begotten, dearly beloved son. It's because it dismisses his leaving the courts of heaven and being born as a babe in Bethlehem and sees no point in it and no purpose.

The greatest act that the world will ever know. It means nothing to it. Then supremely, when God laid on him the iniquity of earth all, and he in the garden of Gethsemane in his agony is sweating drops of blood.

It sees no purpose in it. When, if I may use such language, the very heart of God was breaking and bleeding. As this horrible thing called sin comes between God and his own son, and the son cries out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Their attitude sees nothing in it, and it dismisses it and derides it.

Thus you clean act of God's love. The final manifestation and unveiling of his holy heart. It has no use for it, no interest in it, because of its self-satisfaction and its self-sufficiency.

That's why it's abomination in the sight of God. He is at honoreth not the son, honoreth not the father that has sent him. Oh, my dear friend, where do you stand? Don't think of your actions for a moment.

Don't think of your life, your good deeds. Face this one question. Do you think that you were good enough to stand in the presence of God in and of yourself? If you do, you are an abomination in the sight of God, and you'll be treated as such.

Oh, wait. Do you think that by further effort you can make yourself good enough, either

to please God or to become a Christian? Do you say, well, I know I'm convinced by that. I admit that that is God's standard, and I'm going to make another mighty effort.

Are you? If you are, that is also an abomination in the sight of God, because God has told us once and forever that all our efforts will never be enough, and that there are necessary because he has done it all. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believe us. He offers it all, lastly, here it is.

Do you see the absolute necessity of the coming of God's Son into this world in order to save you? Do you see the absolute necessity of his death upon the cross before God can forgive you? Do you see that that was God's way of making forgiveness possible for you? Do you see face to face with God's standard that you're utterly and completely hopeless? But that because of that Christ came in order to redeem you. If you do, you are blessed in the sight of God. If you don't, you are an abomination in the sight of God, and the better you are, the more moral you are, the greater is the abomination, that which is highly esteemed amongst men, all it bursts of tonight, is abomination in the sight of God, because it is missing, the very heart of God himself.

And that leads my dear friend to nothing but hell and tradition and suffering and endless remorse, God forbid. But anybody who has listened to my words this evening should experience such a fate. Face God's standard and fly to Christ and cast yourself at his feet and say, nothing in my hand I bring simply to die cross I click.

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