

Fearlessly Confessing Christ Before Others (Luke 12:1-12)

Four marks of genuine conversion and confession of Christ:

- 1. The disciple of Jesus Christ must be on guard against hypocrisy in his own heart (v.1-3)**
 - After departing from the Pharisee's house (11:37-54), Luke informs us that the scribes and Pharisees are "waiting" to "catch Jesus" in something He may say.
 - Along the road to Jerusalem (9:57), Jesus' popularity grew to an unprecedented level: there were "many" thousands of people "trampling" on one another, trying to listen to Jesus.
 - Jesus' ministry has now come to a point where He needs to teach His "disciples" what they must be on guard against, how to think and act concerning their testimony before others, and approaching persecution and ostracism.

Jesus warns His disciples about the yeast (leaven) of the Pharisees (v.1):

- Beware means to "watch" and refers to the personal responsibility to protect themselves from the permeating effect of hypocrisy. The Greek word "beware" was a nautical term meaning to steer a ship in a particular direction or to sail to a specific destination.
- Jesus uses hypocrisy and leaven as synonymous with one another. What is leaven?

Leaven influences and is subtle, spreads slowly, swells, and sours the meal (sourdough):

- The Israelites were to remove leaven from their homes on the week of the Passover (Ex. 12:14-20), which was a symbolic act of their departure from the pagan influences in Egypt.
- Three "types" of leaven: (1) Corruption, and therefore, a symbol of evil (Ex. 12:15, 13:3; Lev. 2:11, 6:17; Deut. 16:3; Matt. 16:6, 11; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9). (2) Sense of permeation and influence (Lev. 7:13, 23:17; Amos 4:5). (3) Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20-21).

Hypocrisy:

- Depending on its context, it can refer to an actor who wore a mask and impersonated others. Theatrical masks and yeast create false impressions: masks produce exterior appearances at variance from intrinsic characteristics, and yeast activates a gaseous reaction that increases mass but not substance and weight.
- The leaven of the Pharisees is the hypocritical man-made artifices that seek to replace truth under the form of "worship." It is a subtle "leaven" that the heart joyfully receives. As the heart receives it, it affects the whole person.
- Hypocrisy is difficult to discern in the heart if it is never discovered. Jesus' warning is clear: everything will be revealed either in this life or in the future (Prov. 28:13; Rom. 2:15; 1 Cor. 4:5).

- 2. The disciple of Jesus Christ fears God over man and trusts God's loving care of the ordering of events in his life (v.4-7)**

God is to be feared, not man:

- The fear of man is one of the most significant obstacles to consistent discipleship. The key to boldness before men is a proper understanding of God's eternal glory, power, and character and the borrowed/delegated, temporary authority of men. Regardless of man's vested power or authority, there is no jurisdiction beyond the grave. God, however, has authority over the body and the soul (v.5). He can cast the sinner into hell (Gehenna).

Gehenna is a valley south of Jerusalem that empties into the Kidron Valley. Before King Josiah, Judahites sacrificed their sons and daughters in burned offerings to Baal Molech on a "high place" called Topeth (Jer. 7:32, 19:4-6, 32:34-35; 2 Kgs. 23:10). It is called the "second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) and was a graphic image depicting hell, where trash was burned during Jesus' day.

* For the believer, the fear of God is a concoction of reverence, respect, awe, and glory through the illustration of a friend (v.4) and son/daughter before their Father.

God cares for and orders the affairs of His lesser-valued creation. How much more for those made in His image and His own, for whom He will give Himself? (v.6-7)

- Sparrows were both consumed for food (they are clean and kosher) and used as a sacrificial offering for those who could not afford a lamb or goat (Lev. 5).
- Five sparrows were sold for two pennies (Greek is *assarion*). One "penny" equals one-sixteenth of a denarius (day's wage), and two are sold for a penny (Matt. 29).
- God also knows how much hair is on the head, demonstrating His omniscience (v.7).
 - * Jesus informs His disciples that despite birds being sold and the number of hairs on the head, there is never disorder. While there may be vexation and perplexity, God is omniscient and benevolent.

- 3. The disciple of Jesus Christ repents and acknowledges his hypocrisy before God, anticipating the cleansing power of true forgiveness (v.8-10)**

- Jesus is prepping His disciples for the future: they will be summoned before the Jews (synagogues) and Romans (rulers and authorities) to give an account.
- The Son of Man (v.8): in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus refers to Himself as "I" (Matt. 10:32). The distinction between Jesus' human self-reference as "I" and future self-reference as "Son of Man" is not a description of two beings but a distinction between His earthly humiliation and future heavenly exaltation (Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:8-9; 1 Tim. 3:16).

What is blasphemy and the unpardonable sin?

- (1) Claiming Jesus is possessed by a demon (Mk. 3:28-30). (2) Apostasy by a Christian, as opposed to a non-believer who is speaking against Jesus. (3) Rejecting Christ after His resurrection, in contrast to doing so before it. (4) Rejection of the disciples' testimony, which (after Pentecost) was inspired by the Holy Spirit. (5) Persistent and unremitting resistance to the Spirit's work as He brings conviction of sin and reveals the need for repentance and faith (Acts 7:51).
- For the Jew, it was the sin of the "high hand" (Num. 15:30-31), which was a willful, defiant sin. In the NT, it is linked with the question of apostasy (Heb. 6:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:16).
- The wordplay of "acknowledge, denial, words against, blasphemy, and forgiven" (v.8-10) is through the chronic rejection of God's word in the heart while the truth is known in the head. It is the combination of light in the head and darkness of the heart. It is a conscious, willful, deliberate blasphemy of God's grace in Christ through the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The symptom of unbelief is hostility, hatred, or indifference.
- It is a hardness of sin that will not be forgiven, not because of a deficiency of God's grace but a hardened disposition. It goes against the conviction of intellect, enlightened conscience, and dictates of the heart.

What do I do when I have rejected, disowned, and dishonored Him publicly or privately?

- Acknowledge it as sin, repent of it, and ask God to cleanse you from the stain of sin. Ask Him to give you boldness and fearlessness born out of love toward Him and walk in faith.
 - * The only unpardonable sin is unbelief in the person and work in Jesus Christ, refusing to appropriate His work through faith.

- 4. The disciple of Jesus Christ has stored God's word in his heart and is ready for the unexpected (v.11-12)**

- Contextually, the disciples would be summoned before the authorities (Jews and Gentiles) and give an account for their word and witness. Since the NT canon was incomplete, they depended on the Holy Spirit to bring Jesus' words to remembrance and empower boldness.
- Given the progressive nature of revelation, the Holy Spirit also uniquely endowed the disciples in the first century (Acts 7; 22; 26).
- Similarly, God promises to give His people the words to speak in unexpected situations if they have deposited His words in their hearts.
- The Holy Spirit can only retrieve His word if His disciple has it stored in the heart.