

## **LIVING FOR ETERNITY**

### **THREE HIGHER PRINCIPLES**

This morning we are on the third message on the series of 'Living for Eternity'. The first was an introduction. The second was about how we must handle finances properly and how we must wrestle with the love of money. Today we are going to look at three higher principles above all other principles and what I called high principles that must guide our life in the walk and high law of eternity that governs this natural life that we have.

So this morning we will look at the higher laws of God. Why we are talking about this series is so that we realize that on the one hand as we grow in faith principles, as we excel in the things of this life, as we have worldly success, spiritual success, yet we need to have our success tempered with a vision and a heart for eternity. Like the book of Ecclesiastes says that man is born with eternity in his heart. Success in this life is temporal but spiritual success is permanent. Sometimes they both go together. Sometimes they are both contradictory.

We look first at Matthew 23: 23 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."*

Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees saying that they have obeyed certain commandments and among them are the commandments of tithing, offering, etc although their attitude was wrong on the obedience in spite of their obedience to the laws of their traditions. Jesus is not saying we do not obey those laws like

tithing and offering and many others sub-law. He said here in verse 23, not to leave the others undone. In other words all the other commandments are as important. But then we realize that there are some that are higher than others. Some laws are higher than others. The Pharisees in obeying the other laws have neglected what Jesus says and is the phrase He used: the weightier matters of the law, the more important that carry more weight. Those are higher, supreme and more powerful than all the others.

We know in life, there are different degrees of authority. For example, a case decided in a lower court maybe over turned in the higher court. Then people can appeal right up to the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court. What is decided in the highest level makes all the judgments of the lower courts null and void. In a similar way in the natural scientific world, we have the law of thermodynamics and there are the laws of heats that cause an airplane to bypass or surpass or overcome the pull of the law of gravity. So we know even in the natural world, the higher law can overcome the lower law. We realize that electric power or mechanical power can overcome the law of friction that prevents all things from moving perpetually. So there are higher laws and lower laws in the natural life. What about in the spiritual world? As we study the Word, as we gain knowledge in all kinds of manner of commandments, laws we need to bear in mind that there are some laws that are high above all laws because these laws affect our reward, lack of reward in eternity.

Now there is something mentioned about the Pharisees. Luke 16: 14 *“Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.”*

We just talked about the love of money last week. And of all people, the Pharisees especially were lovers of money. They were supposedly the most religious and spiritual people in Jesus' time. They held the laws in their hands. They have both religious authority and natural authority in the time of Romans under the Romans jurisdiction. Here comes Jesus and He rebuked the Pharisees. The whole chapter 23 is the utterance of one woe after another. Now He did not immediately came to that confrontation. But remember that every Christian, if they do not watch out have a potential to become a Pharisee. It is impossible for one who is neither religious nor experienced in spiritual matter to ever be a Pharisee.

All they will be is a publican because they do not know God. All they want is to know God. The only possibility of Pharisees being made in our modern era in a Christian world is for Christian who has come to know God. They know some of the Word and then move into a Pharisee attitude. Any move of God can end up as a new Pharisee of the next move. That's dangerous. That is why we need to have this kind of message although sometimes it's hard to teach this kind of message. So we have to teach it the gentlest way we can. If you think we are talking about you, well, look up and praise God and say that may be me and that may not be me. But all illustration will not be from here. As we look it is a sort of warning to us. As God move from move to move and as new things began to come up in the forefront, we realize that every old ministry, every old experience, every old Christian has a potential of adopting the same position as the Pharisees unless we know that antidote for that.

The antidote for Pharisaic attitudes is found in Matthew 23: 23 and in what we are talking about, Jesus said there are three things they neglected: justice, mercy and faith. Now in a cross reference, He speaks about it differently in Luke 16. He speaks about it in a different manner. Luke 11: 43 as He was rebuking the Pharisees He makes almost similar statement but He says here in verse 42-43 *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God."*

So that tells us that the love of God and mercy are related as one point in our cross reference here. But our text will be from Matthew 23: 23 those things are the same. No.1 Justice. No.2 Mercy or the love of God. No.3 Faith. Why are those three areas important? In I Cor. 13 Paul says it in a different manner. For there are three things, there is hope, there is faith and there is love. And he says the greatest of the three is love. Do you know that Paul also says about those three things? But he says them differently. Love ties up with mercy. Faith ties up with faith. Hope ties up with justice. The eternal hope of judgment to come and how we will do in the judgment. So these three points are key antidote to prevent those in the old move from being the new Pharisee of the new move. Every move of God faces its own set of Pharisees and Sadducees. The sad thing was the Pharisee was once upon a time a bright eye believer.

So these three cures are important. Justice speaks about correctness in methodology; whether the methods or patterns that we use in applying the principles, precepts and the laws of God are correct or not. Mercy or love speaks about correctness in motive. Faith speaks about correctness in the source of power or the source of energy. These three must balance up in our life.

For example you could do the right thing with the wrong motive. It makes it wrong. You could use the right method and have the wrong motive. It makes it wrong. On the other hand, you could have the right heart and right intention but you use the wrong method. It makes it wrong. We are talking about perfection in those three realms. However you could also get your motive correct, your method correct but the source of power incorrect. So you end up doing by your own might and your own strength with a pure motive to God and with a right method but with the wrong power. You didn't depend on the power of the Spirit. You didn't depend on faith; you depended on your own strength. You could depend on your own strength to do the right thing and it makes it wrong. So if you are wrong in any of these three, you are wrong.

How do we define a Pharisee? A Pharisee is someone who is wrong in either of these three or all of them. That's our modern definition of a Pharisee. A Pharisee is someone, a Christian who may have the right motive and of course if you use the wrong method you obviously have the wrong source. If you have the right motive but uses the wrong method you are a Pharisee. Or if you have the right method, you are doing the right thing but you are having the wrong motive of doing those things you are a Pharisee as far as the bible definition is. We have three simple definitions in Pharisee. If you are wrong in method, wrong in motive or wrong in source of power you are a Pharisee. Having a form of godliness but without its power. When we apply these three to our modern Christianity, there are a lot of Pharisaicism going on. We need to check ourselves so that we would be in the move not against the move, where we will be flowing along the way and standing in the way in what God wants to do. Jesus encounter with the Pharisees was gradual and progressive and we will see seven encounters that Jesus had and develop from there and see how they were wrong in one of these three all the time. Always wrong in one of these three. Or sometimes wrong in all the three areas.

Matthew 9: 9 “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.’” Then look at what Jesus said, “But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Jesus was just having a good time with those who have turned to Him. Matthew the tax collector, sinners and publicans and all these tax collectors were friends of Matthew. So Matthew gave a feast. He gave a party. I didn't know Jesus attend parties. He does. But make sure you have as much feasting as fasting. If all you do is eat, drink and be merry something is wrong. Sometimes you have to fast, pray and intercede. It balances up. He was just having a good time and here was Jesus joining those folks there sitting down and just making Himself at home. Here come these Pharisees who do not mix with tax collectors. Tax collectors are considered unclean. In fact the Pharisees had a long book call the ‘Talmud’ that has all the details of what to do, what not to do. They follow them very strictly. Some of them go outside of God's Word. They ask how can Jesus being so spiritual mix with these people. How can it be? They also tried to imply that Jesus also must be like them. On what basis are they making the judgment?

See we are talking on the first level. There are three: justice, mercy and faith. Justice is not from the normal word *justification* or *justify*. The word *justification* or *justify* is from the word *dikaiosis*; *dikaosune* actually means righteousness. The word *justice* is not from the word *righteousness*. The word *justice* in Matthew 23 is not the word *dikaiosis*, it's the word *krisis*, which comes from the root word *krino*. This means to make the correct judgment on the method to be used. This is why we tie justice to method. Whenever you use a method you exclude other methods. Methodology has to be determined by our knowledge and our ability to judge. All methods derive out of knowledge. All knowledge derives out of judgment. So as far as they are concerned, it is wrong to mix with the tax

collectors. It's not right. It will pollute their lives.

What happen is, of those three areas the Pharisees may be partially correct in method. They have a point. What they say has a point. But they were without mercy and therefore without faith in God. All they want is to keep themselves pure and holy. Maybe originally it started all right. Many hard yokes that man put on another as tradition started out well. Maybe originally the tax collectors were a bad influence on the spiritual people. So somebody came out with a judgment that says it's better not to mix with them. Then through the generations, it developed into a sin just to mix around with the tax collectors. Maybe that method started out well. But now that method had no mercy in it, and it became unacceptable in God's sight. It detached faith from its action. The correct method is that when we are with the sinners, we should have faith that the power of God is enough to keep us from sin. See it's a lack of faith and a lack of mercy. They got one right and got the other two wrong. Therefore the whole action was wrong.

Jesus said, you folks should go and learn what it means to have mercy and not sacrifice. I mean you sacrificed your fellowship. You sacrificed parties. You sacrificed this and that but there is no mercy in your heart. You don't love the tax collectors. You treat them as enemies of God. You don't have compassion anymore on people because of your laws. You have gone to the extreme in your method.

Now this is important in living for eternity. Some of us are struggling in our lives with decisions. Take for example, supposing that you have a rule to keep and there are different types of people. There are some people who will follow the rules strictly that they forget the purpose of the rule. Why the rule was made. And as a result by holding on to that rule, without making special cases on ground of compassion or mercy, their rules end up oppressing people. I mean you could be a stickler of the rule and be very nasty about it. It's just like for example, a general rule that says that only properly dressed people are allowed into the sanctuary. But what if a prostitute who is used to dressing scantily, suddenly felt the urge to come to church? She comes right off the streets to church in her street clothes; do you could apply the rule without mercy? The woman was seeking the Lord in her heart, but you chased her away and she is lost for all eternity.

Do you remember there were many times that people wanted to come to Jesus and the disciples tried to prevent them from coming to Jesus? Bartimeus wanted healing, he cried, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' Poor man, he cannot see. Jesus was walking along the way with His group of disciples. Poor Bartimeus shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' Some of His disciples looked and just passed him by. Jesus just kept on walking. But this man couldn't stand it. He shouted even louder. Then the disciples came and told him to keep quiet. They followed the rules but they don't have mercy. Finally he must have made a nuisance of himself. He became so loud that Jesus stopped and said, "Bring him to Me." I wonder how the others thought who has stopped him from coming to Jesus. Wouldn't they feel embarrassed? Wouldn't they feel ashamed? Now we are talking about real principles. Out here in the life that we live, whether we live for temporal or eternity, those who only see the leaves but don't see the forest are people who tend to be like the Pharisees. They are sticklers to the rules and forgot what is the purpose of the rules. Sometimes we got to educate these people.

Like for example, I go to Singapore almost every week to teach in a church. Every week I see the same staff in the hotel. It is their rule that they must see the passport and I must fill up the forms. For the first six months I kept doing that until I told the staff, "Look here, if I were your boss, I wouldn't want you to do this. Because your rules say, you got to see the passport but you see my face every week. You could practically memorize my passport number. Why do I have to keep showing you my passport?" I said, "If I were your boss, I wouldn't want you to just know the rule, I would want you to know the purpose behind the rule.' The reason behind that rule is so that you don't have people or criminals or all these kinds of foreign elements staying in your hotel and bring a bad element on the society. You want good people and not crooks. That is the valid reason, which I could think of for that rule. I said, "You know me. You saw my face for six months." From that time onwards they never ask for my passport. It's a practical application we are talking about.

Perhaps some of us are facing a decision. Perhaps somebody cheated you. Perhaps somebody robbed you. You got a point here. You said, "Alright I could see that guy and get back my money. I could do this and get back all my money. I

could make life difficult for that person.” But wait, are you living for eternity or are you living for this earth? You may get back your one thousand dollars but lose your soul. Which is more important? See here we are talking about living for eternity. There are many times we come across decisions like that. To the world you look like a dumb fool. You said, “Never mind, I know this person is having hard times and if I press every cent out of this person, his wife and children will go without food for a month. I will cause him greater suffering. I would rather forgive the debt.” Somehow you would ask God to bring back the money to me, which I too need. So then you make a decision based on living for eternity not living for this earth. It brings greater reward. You bring a smile on the face of our Father because blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. So we are talking about living for eternity. Making decision like that is based on understanding how all the laws fit together. Not just seeing the leaves without seeing the whole forest. So here we have the Pharisees who were extreme in their methods.

Their next encounter is again in Matthew 32-34. This is the second encounter Jesus had recorded. He may have many encounters but there are seven recorded in the book of Matthew before the climax of Matthew 23. He says, chapter 9 verse 32 *“As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, ‘It was never seen like this in Israel.’ But the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.’”*

That is a very hard word. Cross reference also to Matthew 12: 24 *“Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’”*

Now Jesus is being accused of being demonic. They may not be against the casting out of demons but definitely throughout these seven incidents; they never had any mercy at all. So that is definitely something out for them.

Secondly, their motives were always wrong. Their motives were always to get

money out of the people. They were lovers of money. Like Luke 16: 14 says, *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.*

But in the third area of faith the Pharisees didn't believe. They don't have faith that the supernatural God can still manifest today. They are only limited or bound by the natural world and natural methods. As a result if anything exceptional comes outside of their religious thinking, it is of the devil. That's the Pharisee's attitude. If you don't do things my way it's the devil. It's wrong. That's a Pharisee mind at work. Jesus was very strict. He doesn't associate the Pharisees' way of thinking. Jesus of course pronounced a terrible judgment upon them for judging the Holy Spirit. In other words, they question the source. They themselves had no source of power like Jesus. Is there any other form or source in that area?

For example, sometimes you have a minister who is very effective in soul winning. Then another Christian will say that his ability to win souls is due to his kind of character and training. That is a Pharisee's thinking. Don't you acknowledge the gift of God on that minister's life? Can't you see the grace of God and maybe an anointing to win souls working in his life? But you try to explain everything away by natural means. Or perhaps a person has an influence on other lives and their life having an impact on others. You say that it is just natural charisma. You are on the borderline of trying to explain away the source of a person's power and gifting from God. It is dangerous.

Korah and all the rebellious folks in the Old Testament said Moses, "We can do the same like you." They never recognized that Moses had special gifting. They said, 'we are equal to you.' They never acknowledged that source of power that Moses had. They thought they could have the same thing that Moses had, the Holy Spirit. But they must learn to get the Holy Spirit the same way he got it. So it's a Pharisee's thinking that does not associate faith with the power of God. Their faith is in themselves and in their own methods. That was the second encounter.

Third encounter Matthew 12: 1 onwards. *"At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of*

*grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'"*

These Pharisees had been following Jesus everywhere. I don't know why they were with Jesus. Because it says in verse 1, Jesus went to the grain fields and His disciples were there. They were very hungry. They seldom stop to buy food. Jesus was that busy in the ministry and any way Jesus did not eat much. And so as they were walking across the grain field the disciples began to experience what many new Christians in our church have. When they are new and our church services go past 3 pm on Sundays, they look around and find there is no eating shop around, they are forced to eat whatever they have or stay hungry. The disciples only found fresh corn and no eating shops were open since it was a Sabbath day. So they just went over and pluck some of the corns and started eating. The Pharisees jumped up and said, 'Look! He broke the Sabbath's law.'" The disciples just plucked one corn, and the Pharisees said that was work and that they have broken the Sabbath's law. Jesus in verse 3 talked about exception. We must have the ability to obey and apply the commandments of God. We must also have the ability to discern when the exception is.

Now I love books. I read all kinds of materials. Almost in every field whether it be in science, in math, in arts, in almost every field, every rule I have found has some exceptions. Every rule has a small little place somewhere where there is an exceptional clause that excludes some. Even some of your most basic mathematic formula that you learn has exceptions. So there are exceptions even what you learn about circles. Being a ' $\pi r^2$ ' the area of a circle. It doesn't apply exactly anymore when you go to the higher math. You find that is not exactly  $\pi r^2$ . There is still a small little clause when you handle it in a full circular sense. Almost in every field when you began an expert in that field, you find those exceptions are there. We need to be a master to learn the general rules and then you learn the exceptions. You could never learn the exception until you learn the general rules. If you have no comprehension of the general rules the exceptions look meaningless to you.

So in every field of studies there are exceptions. That is why even in the spiritual world every exception is not the breaking of the law. Every exception is

the operation of the higher law. Every exception is not breaking the law. It's not just negating the law. You can't negate the law of gravity. You overcome it through a higher law. We know that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All men must die. But then we have Enoch who didn't die. Elijah didn't die. Why didn't they die? Not because they don't need Jesus. It was through Jesus' power that they were resurrected but they didn't die. They didn't follow the bible rule that says all men must die. I am trying to show here that the spiritual world had such laws that come in at a certain point and bring out the higher law that at first look like it contradict the normal law but it's not. Higher laws operate at times when weightier matters step in. We need to most of all harmonize these three: Justice, love or mercy and faith. When we have all three harmonized then you are in the flow of God.

Jesus replied to them in Matthew 12: 3, Jesus said, alright, if you want to go by the rule's book about breaking the Sabbath, let me give you scriptures where people broke the Sabbath. Verse 3, *"But Jesus said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?'"* They couldn't answer. David was not a priest. But David ate the priest food. Exception. Yes, any other people who ate it would have died. There was an exception that took place. A higher law was operating. It says in verse 5, *"Or have you read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple."* And again He repeated to them, verse 7, *"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice', you would not have condemned the guiltless."*

They had their method right but their motives were wrong and their faith was also wrong. So they were in a ministry of condemnation, which Jesus doesn't condone or accept. This law of the Sabbath has nothing to do with the original plan of the Sabbath law that God made. They kept the leaves and forgot the forest. They forgot why God made the Sabbath. We must make a qualification here. No lower law can be broken with principle involved. In other words, you don't just overcome the old law. There are principles in exception. I mean if you make an exception everybody will take this truth half bake. In other words, you say everything has exception. I am always the exception. Exceptions are based on

principles. What are the principles that you based your exceptions on? For example, every other person who sees President Bush in the White House must come through proper procedures except his wife and children. Why are they exempted? It is because of their flesh and blood relationship with him. Don't tell me that when Barbara Bush wants to go to White House she makes an appointment to go and stay there. Of course not. There is an exception made. Exception is not without reason. Exception is because of the law of flesh and blood relationship. So every exception is not unprincipled. Exceptions must come with principles. An unprincipled exception is only a false application of a law.

Jesus keeps on encountering these folks. Here in chapter 12: 9 the opposition He had because of the Sabbath day still continues. *"Now He had departed from there they went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'"*

Again they got their rules all messed up. They are so hard on keeping the Sabbath that they had no more mercy left. They don't care for that man. They don't love that man anymore. You see when you are so occupied by what you want that you forgot compassion, love and mercy. You are a bone fide Pharisee. Just think about the parable of the servant. The king forgave the servant a great big debt. Later on this man had another servant who owed him some money. He grabbed this servant and said, "Pay back my money or I'll put you in prison." He is more interested in his money in return. He did not care what happen to that person's soul. Whether the person dies in paying the debt or lives miserably in paying him the debt, he did not care. He was selfish. He was living for this earth and not living for eternity.

What about the rich man and the poor man Lazarus? There is a poor man who comes to eat at the rich man's table. The rich man had so much even the crumbs were given to the dogs. The poor man wanted the crumbs badly but even that he could not have. The rich man lived for this earth not for eternity. We need to examine our lives. We are preaching principles that if we would obey them will bring us into the higher realm so that we have more reward in heaven, so that we won't be so worldly, so carnal, and so revengeful, so like the people of this world. So that we can be a new breed of people. A new creation. A people of love. A

people of worship. A people of power. A people of compassion. A people full of mercy. That is what God wants to build in these last days.

So Jesus spoke to them in verse 11. Jesus said, *“What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?”*

If a donkey or one sheep happened to fall into a pit on the Sabbath, the Pharisees themselves would have helped and taken the sheep out. But when a man was sick and needed healing, they wouldn't allow healing taking place. What's the nature of a Pharisee? They have double standards. They tell people don't cheat but they cheat. They tell others not to bribe but they themselves pay bribes. Don't do this, don't do that but they themselves do. Double standards. Jesus pointed to their double standards and said, *“Don't you have mercy?”* Remember this; don't give others rules, which you cannot keep. Before you give a rule to somebody, ask yourself, *‘Am I able to keep the rules?’* If you can't then don't have double standards. When we live for eternity, we live for love and for compassion and for mercy. So Jesus confronted them and He went ahead and healed the man. The Pharisees in verse 14 were angry with Him and sought to destroy Him. All because He healed on the Sabbath.

When a person has a Pharisee's mind and thinking a lot of good things look like crime in their own eyes. It becomes a crime to show mercy. It becomes a crime to forgive rather than to take judgment. It becomes a crime when judgment and punishment are not meted out but rather forgiveness is given. In their eyes it become a crime. That's dangerous thinking.

The next encounter in chapter 12: 38, *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”*

Here the Pharisees wanted Jesus to show them some demonstrations of supernatural power but all His other demonstrations they would not accept. They wanted it on their terms not on His terms. Jesus said there would be no sign given under your terms. The only sign given is the sign of Jonah where the Son of Man will be crucified for three days and three nights. He will be in the center of the earth and then He will be raised. That's the only sign that will be given to you. To those who believe there are many signs. But to the Pharisees He said, no other sign. If you cannot believe in the Son of Man, you cannot believe anything. If you cannot believe that Jesus is the Messiah, you cannot believe in any other thing. See there was a law they couldn't fulfill.

Now cross reference to the book of John chapter one when Jesus talked to Nathanael in verse 45, *"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' And Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said to him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!' Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'" Immediately Nathanael believe and he said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel."*

Verse 50, *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you believe because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater sign than these. Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

Jesus promised him a greater sign because he believed the first sign. In other words, Jesus was saying to the Pharisees, if you don't believe in Me, there is nothing else. But when Nathanael believed in Him, there were some other things and signs that he got. So in Matthew 12: 38 it shows that the Pharisees had no faith in God.

I think of many ministries and ministers of God who were struggling in the various

places. Many of them are called to denominational churches. Then sometimes when they want to do something in their churches as a result of some discovery from the Word, they are hindered because the people around them lacked faith. So when they want to do something like healing and deliverance, they are told, "Don't." They want to launch out into some ministry but the others say don't. Lets see the money first then we rent the place. You say we must go by faith and then we rent the place. It's just like arguing with Joshua. They are standing before river Jordan. If there was a Pharisee, the Pharisee would say, 'Don't cross the Jordan until it's parted.' Joshua says, 'No you must enter in while it's full. Then it will be parted.' No, they say seeing is believing. Joshua says, 'No believing is seeing.' They lived in two different worlds. Those who live for eternity say, believing is seeing. Those who live only for this earth say, seeing is believing. I don't believe it until I see. Two different worlds. Two different personalities. Two different philosophies. Two different concepts producing two different types of people.

Our fifth encounter is in Matthew 15. The pressure is now building up. In verse 1 again Jesus and the Pharisees battled. It looks like they are just crossing swords all through the gospel. The only problem Jesus had is with the Pharisees. In fact Jesus didn't have any problem with the Roman government. The only problem He had was the religious folks called the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

In Matthew 15: 1 *"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.'* He answered and said to them, *'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?'*

Jesus pointed out to the tradition that was contradictory to the Word. So the next thing they did here is that they put their tradition above the Word. When you began to move into methods minus mercy, minus faith in God, your methods will end up as traditions that are so heavy that no man can carry. Not only that Jesus says there are methods and traditions have become so strong like quick-sand and like the mud that it said here in verse 6 your traditions have made the commandment that is the Word of God of zero power. Jesus says you have made the commandment of God of no effect through your tradition. There is no more power. Which is why we need to understand justice. See all the time their justice

was wrong. Their judgment was always wrong.

The basis of judgment was given by Jesus in Matthew 7: 1 onwards "Judge not, that you be not judged." Do not try to cast the speck out of your brother's eye, unless you remove the beam out of your own eye. So the basis of justice is this: unless we judge ourselves we are in no position to judge others. Unless we have done something ourselves we are in no position to help others. That is why when someone has a suggestion, someone has something, I would ask, "Have you done it yourself?" When someone has a comment on how to dance, I would say do you dance yourself? Just in the room. Well, dance physically and let us see. When someone says, this is the way to do a prophecy, I would ask, "Do you prophesy yourself?" Do we charismatic go to the non-charismatic and ask them whether tongues are right or wrong? Never. You will never go to someone who has never prayed for the sick and ask, "Can you tell me something? What are the rules about praying for the sick?" No, we never do that. In a natural, would you go to a doctor who has never operated anyone and in fact is a fresh graduate and you are just to be operated for a sickness, you will never let him put the surgeon scalpel on your flesh. Would you give your company account to a person who is not a qualified accountant? In the same area, would you in the spiritual basis make a judgment on something that we lack experience?

It is important to learn when it's right to judge and when it's not right. There are many times in our lives that we withhold judgment. Sometimes people ask me, "What do you think of this man of God?" I say, "I haven't come to his stage, so I cannot say anything." We need to know the limit of how much we can go forth. That's where we learn to live for eternity. So here we have in Matthew 15, they have gone so far out from the Word. By Matthew 15 Jesus says in verse 4, *"For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and mother; and he who curses father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, 'Whoever says to his father and mother, 'whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple is released from honoring his father or mother. Then you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your traditions. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me. '"* It was a tremendous encounter.

Now His sixth encounter in chapter 19 verse 3, *“The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’”* And He answered and said to them, *‘Have you not read from the beginning what is so and verse 7, “why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your hearts.’”* Did you notice in Matthew 19 the Pharisees now misinterpret the Word of God? They apply the Word only when it’s suitable for them. When it’s not suitable they don’t apply. I mean you read about the woman who was caught in sin. They brought the woman to Jesus and said, *“This woman was caught in adultery in the very act.”* But the bible laws say both the woman and the person who committed the adultery with her must be stoned to death. They only kept the part that suited their purposes but allowed the man to go scot free. We don’t know what happened. Perhaps the other person was known to them or paid them some money or whatever. We are not sure. But we are going to see afterward how they love money above all else. Anything with money will do. Money will buy their way in power. Although they are religious money was their god. Maybe the other person escaped because he was in a prestigious position. Or because that person had some influence on them. They could give some money and the Pharisees will excuse them. That was the way they were.

In Matthew 23 it says in verse 16, the Pharisees say *“Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.”* This is the kind of people they were. The gold is more important than the temple. *“Whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it but swears by the altar, it is nothing.”* Jesus says in verse 19, is the altar or the gift more important. See this is the kind of people they were. So here they were bringing a law not because they were interested to help the people. Not because they were interested to help marriages. Not because they were interested to help broken marriages or broken lives. They were bringing a law to try to catch Jesus and to get Him to be accused. Their purpose to ask those questions was not to help anyone. They had no mercy in their hearts.

Sometimes we have Christians who pick one portion of the scripture and try to run another person down with that scripture. Have you ever seen Christians quoting bible to shoot another person down. The bible is never meant that way. I mean Christians argue with the bible. That’s the sad thing. Christians argue with

the bible in the flesh, quote enough scriptures to satisfy themselves. But they will never quote scripture that will be against themselves. This kind of argument has no end as long as you are on this earth. A person who chooses to walk like a Pharisee there is no end to their arguing until Jesus comes and let God Himself argue. Which is why Paul says put away all these fables; forget all these kinds of nonsense arguments.

Remember in Mark 9 when the disciples couldn't cast out the demon and Jesus came down from the mount of transfiguration? It's found in Matthew 17, Luke 9 and Mark 9. Jesus came down and His disciples couldn't cast out the demon. Jesus found the disciples and the Pharisees arguing. Probably arguing about why the demon couldn't come out. The demon possessed boy and the father were ignored. No money. This is called living for this earth but not living for eternity. They forgot the weightier matters of the law and they are so focused on the lighter matters of the law. They are so concerned about the dot and the dash that they forgot the purpose of the law. The law is not for the every dot and every dash for argument sake. Because human beings are so clever, we could argue until Jesus comes. Do you know that every good intellectual person of reasonable I.Q. can argue until Jesus comes? There is no end. The person who believes God and does not believe God can argue until Jesus comes. In the end the solution is both have to have faith. You have faith that there is no God. I have faith that there is God. I can bring proof that there is God. You can say those proofs are subjective. Both ways. You can always argue until Jesus comes. That's why the bible says the natural man cannot understand the things of the spirit. They are foolish to them.

So here we have the Pharisees and they misquoted the bible, one after another. At first you can see the progression. They started in Matthew 9 and they started by being extreme in their methods. Then slowly became more and more. They began to associate God with the devil by calling Jesus Beelzebub. Then slowly they reached a point where their tradition becomes more important than the Word. Now they come to the point where the Word is only used for their own end. Not even for profit to bring to God or to bring someone closer to God. That's the extent of their depravity.

Finally the seventh, last encounter in Matthew 22: 35 *"Then one of them, a*

*lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?'*

I want you to know that is a very difficult question because in the presence of the Pharisees and the Jewish custom, there are thousands and thousands of laws. No one could have believed Jesus could have given such a simple answer. I mean it's just like somebody asking and saying, 'Well, in all your life in the ministry, what is the greatest principle?' It's very difficult. You could try to summarize but it's difficult. To summarize it the way Jesus summarized it so powerfully. But here He says of all those principles, which is the most important. Now if Jesus give the wrong one He had it. *But Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

In these commandments Jesus covers the three points: Justice, mercy and faith. Because when you love God and you love your neighbor, you will have faith in God and you will be able to believe God in your neighbor. If you have love for God and you have love for your neighbor, you won't be as judgmental and so quick to condemn. If you have love for God, you will be like God. You will be merciful and you will be merciful to your neighbor. What a fantastic answer Jesus gave them. What we see here in Matthew 22 is that they had knowledge without relationship. So what Jesus is bringing forth is the principle. If you live for eternity, relationship is more important than knowledge. To be able to love another person is more important than to get your own way. So we have to make decision in this life. Sometimes it could be your employees. Sometimes it could be your employer. Sometimes it could be in your family's situation. There are plenty of decisions you make. Every decision is either for eternity or for this earth. When you are moved by eternity, you will think about love and relationship and not just that un-right. Do you know some people love to be right? And they love to be right in the eyes of people so much that even if they lose all their friends, they won't mind. That is living for this earth.

It's important to be right and to love people. We do not want to let the lighter matters undone. But lets remember it's important to love our enemies than

to condemn our enemies. This is the higher law against lower law. The law of revenge and vengeance verses the law of forgiveness and love. The higher law must win and be a better law. Living for eternity means to make choices in these three areas: Justice, mercy and faith. All these three must be equal. You must have the correct method, the correct motive and the correct source of power to fulfill.

Finally the climax was in Matthew 23, Jesus summarized every encounter He had with the Pharisees. Everything you find in Matthew 9, 10, 11, 12 rights up to 22 is there. In Matthew 9, when the Pharisees say why do you sit with tax collectors in Matthew 9: 11, but they themselves in Matthew 23: 6, they love the best places at feasts. The best seats in the synagogue. They themselves go for all this kind of positions and when Jesus had a position with the tax collectors they got jealous. Jesus pointed to the inconsistency. Then in Matthew 9: 34 when they talked about calling Jesus the Beelzebub, we see here that Jesus pointed to them the source of the power that is in verse 33, they themselves are serpents, broods of vipers, how can you escape the condemnation of hell. They themselves were the evil ones. But they made Jesus look like He is the evil one. Casting Jesus in the villain role and they the hero. Actually Jesus was the hero and they were the villain. So all these things they encountered with Jesus.

Jesus summarized in Matthew 23: 3-4 *“Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind every burden, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”*

So justice, mercy and faith, principle one: do onto others what you want others to do onto you. Don’t do onto others what you don’t want others do onto you. Don’t require of others what is not required of yourself.

Principle two: Lets read on verse 5. All these are principles living for eternity. Verse 5-12, *“But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogue, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by*

*men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 'But you, do not be called 'Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'*

Principle two: Humble yourself at all times. Seek those things that may be invisible to the world but they are visible in the eyes of God. Principle no.2 is humble yourself in the sight of God. Humble yourself in the sight of man and God will exalt you. That's living for eternity. So there will be many decisions where your decisions will make you more humble in the eyes of man. You feel more humble. You feel like a fool. You feel like a fool saying sorry. It makes you look small. That's alright. That's the cure against being a Pharisee. Or perhaps out there in the world it means to forgive somebody or something against you. Or perhaps your company did things to you and all kinds of things and you are in a position to sue the company. Then you ask yourself, "Shall I operate by the higher law or lower law? The lower law says to sue. The higher law says to forgive." Go by the higher law and you live for eternity. But your friends will call you a fool. Your friends will call you stupid. Your friends will call you all kinds of names. You will be humbled in the eyes of man. That's principle no.2, humble yourself in the sight of God for the higher principle. Humble yourself in the sight of man and God will exalt you. That which is in secret God will reward you openly.

Lets read on to verse 13 onwards, *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."*

I want you to know verse 14, there are some men of God who befriend only the rich. They befriend only widows hoping that the widows die and they get all the inheritance. Evil folks, they are living only for this earth. They are so conscious about building their ministry that they forgot to build their reward in heaven. This is what I tell people saying that it's important for us to discern and realize that the people are needing help. Many times people are concerned about so many

thousands of other things that they forget the most basic thing. Remember, no matter how organized the church is, how organized we become, if somebody comes and break every rule, perhaps they may behave in a way, which is not normally accepted. Perhaps if someone comes and breaks every Sunday service rule; they wear slippers to church and men wear hair long right up to the shoulder. They haven't bathed for the past few months. What's the most important thing here? Isolate them? The most important thing is to love them. Forget all those rulebooks. Forgive. What happen when a new usher come and doesn't know the rules. They may damage some young Christians and lose them forever. I mean if we want to be harsh on every rule, it would be possible. That's why sometimes when there are certain events and help is needed but the people don't respond to the appeals for help, we always exercise mercy and forgiveness. Why, because the higher law is more important. You could exercise the lower law and scold them for their lack of responsiveness but in the end these people may be hurt and lose their walk with God. Maybe these people are not at the level where they are able to flow along at the higher law. But as for us, the higher law is important.

It says in verse 15, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it. Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? Fools and blind! And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it. Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.”*

Principle no.3: The origin and the rule of the source of all commandments is our main guideline. This is the principle of principles. There are many sub-principles. Jesus says it's not the gift that is important but the altar. So our third principle is that the altar is more important than the gift, the temple is more important than the gold and heaven is more important than this earth. May we live our lives for our heavenly Father through the higher law of mercy, the higher law of love, justice and faith. The altar is more important than the gift, the temple is more important than the gold and heaven is more important than this earth. That is the

third major principle. Heaven is more important than this earth. Make your decisions accordingly.

We continue here. Jesus says in verse 24, *“Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees; first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous and says, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt.”*

The fourth principle: What goes on inside a person is more important than what goes on outside. What goes on inside a person’s heart in life is more important than what goes on outside. That speaks a long way. If you can do everything outwardly to a person but you cannot help them on the inside, there is not much help. But you could help them on the inside, you could put peace into their hearts, you could put joy into their hearts, you could put love into their hearts, all these are more important. What goes on in our hearts, in our lives is more important than what we outwardly can show and can do the invisible more than the visible. So of all these three principles, justice, mercy and faith, remember correct method, correct motive and correct source will bring about a balance and prevent us from becoming a new Pharisee in the new way.

I will conclude by looking at I Corinthians 13. Paul says Verse 1-2, *“though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”* Verse one, empty words. Verse two, empty works. Verse 3, *“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”* Verse three, empty sacrifice.

Empty words, empty works and empty sacrifice. No point in giving all your body to be burned if you don't have love. Then he tells us "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hope all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.*"

We have these questions to ask you that you may search yourself.

Verse 4, *love suffers long*. Can you suffer long with people or are you impatient? If you are, love is not working.

*Love is kind*. Are you very rough, harsh or are you kind? The root word is gentle.

*Love does not envy*. Do you look at another person and get jealous at what they have? Love does not do that.

*Love does not parade itself*. Are you someone who always wants to show yourself, be recognized, and be accepted? If you are, love is not operating.

Verse 5, *love does not behave rudely*. Are you someone who likes to run people down just to get your own way, and your rudeness is beyond people's limit? If you are, then love is not working. You are not living for eternity.

*Love does not seek its own, is not provoked*. Are you someone who gets irritated easily, angry easily, upset easily and then vengeful? If you are, love is not working. You are not living for eternity. You are living only for this earth.

And it says, *love thinks no evil*. Are you someone who question another person's motive or try to look for the best in a person? Are you someone who suspects someone's motive or someone who give him or her the benefit of the doubt? If you are not someone who gives them the benefit of the doubt, then love is not working and you are not living for eternity. You are living for this earth.

Verse 6, *Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth*. When your enemy falls and when someone whom you don't actually like very much has something bad happen to him/her, are you grinning from cheek to cheek? Do you secretly relish that moment of pleasure because your enemy has fallen? If you are, you don't have love. You have only normal carnal nature that wishes the worst for his or her enemy. But love is not like that. Love weeps when the enemy falls because you have lost someone who you could have won to God. You know of their punishment in eternity that they will have to face and you weep for them.

Verse 7, *Love bears all things*. Are you someone who is enduring to the end? Are you some one who can be trusted? Are you someone whom others could depend on? Are you the tower of strength to others because you can bear anything? Are you someone who others could share their hurts? Are you someone who others could lean on? Are you someone whom others who are weak could look to you for strength and encouragement? Are you a tower of strength for them? Are you someone whom people could put their head on your shoulder and lean on in times of discouragement and despair? If you cannot bear all these things, love is not working in your life.

*Love believes all things*. Love seeks to believe the best in others. Love seeks to believe what people say. Love seeks to see the best in another person. Not someone who question all things.

*Love hopes all things*. Love looks beyond this life. Love sees someone who fall, someone's problem, someone's weaknesses and someone's failure and says there is

still hope for this person. Love hopes all things. Love sees the possibility of good in every person. Are you someone who gives up on people easily? Are you someone who shut off people easily? If you are, love is not operating. Love hopes in all situations and all things.

*Love endures all things.* Are you someone who year in and year out could be a loyal friend and help? Or are you someone who is only there when it's to your advantage? Are you someone who could endure through the thick and the thin or are you someone who is there only in the thin and not in the thick at difficulty? Are you the friend that stick closer than a brother or are you who run at the moment of danger? Love endures all things. Love is there when someone is rejected. Are you someone who shares in another person's tribulation and not just in his or her glory? Love endures all things.

Paul says, finally *"We know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

May we live for eternity. May we live for love. May we live to love God. May we live to love our neighbor as ourselves.

