

The Remedy for Hypocrisy

Luke 12:2-5

August 16, 2020

I want to welcome you back to our study in Luke chapter 12. And we are looking at the subject of religious hypocrisy. Its danger and its remedy. Last week we talked about the danger of religious hypocrisy. Today, the remedy, which is the fear of God. I've been thinking a lot these days about the need for the fear of God in Christian ministry. And probably, probably coming to a head as I think about what's going on with friends and loved ones out in California from my, the church where I came from.

The threats that have come to them from the government officials, should they persist in meeting as a church? One video I saw posted online was from a, a church of about 1500 in Ventura County, where the officials threatened. They, they placed a temporary restraining order on that place. And then



said they're going to fine everyone who comes \$1000 bucks a head.

This is real time. This is this weekend and the pastor got online and encouraged his people to come. To come. Not to fear man, but to fear God. Not to fear fine, but to fear God. Not to fear social distancing from an unregenerate world, but to fear God. And I'm thinking a lot these days about the need for moral courage among us Christians, and especially moral courage in ministry.

Courage among Christians in these dark days where it seems that there's a spirit of compromise and hypocrisy that has infiltrated and infected the church. And infected friends, people that we love dearly, leaders that are well-known. Leaders that have put on conferences where they have preached sound truth encouraging, strengthening truth, telling us never to fear man but to fear God. And now when it counts, we ask where are they?

I look to dark times, darker times in the history of the Christian church for courage, for examples of courage. I see that it is exactly these kinds of times, these dark times, in which our, we are finding ourselves. But even darker times in church history where the history of the Christian church has been punctuated by acts of great bravery and sacrifice. Acts of moral courage. Acts of martyrdom, even. To stand firm for faith in Christ.

We need these sound guides today. It was Tertullian who wrote in his work, *Apologeticus*, he said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." That is true. Every time a Christian's blood is spilled, it actually strengthens the resolve of God's people. As we face increasing levels of hostility against Christ and his church at this time, in our country, we will have to count the cost. We say, let me ask it in a question. Will we, will we stand with those who have shown such courage and integrity throughout the annals of church history or will we be swayed by those who wear the mask of hypocrisy?

More to the point, will we stand with those who are standing today? All the apostles, except John, died a martyr's death. It was Stephen, not an apostle, but he was a prototype for the deacons, the deaconate. He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And that man, Stephen, stood against immense social pressure to conform. Pressure from family and friends. Pressure to cave in. And he preached a final prophetic sermon that exposed the hypocritical, hypocritical sins of his own generation and they stoned him for it.

So Grace church deacons, are you morally prepared to do that? To stand as an example for the rest of us, to give courage? Stephen heard the words of our Lord spoken on the night of his betrayal, John 15:18 to 19. Jesus said, "If the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you."

When we stand with Christ, we make a decision where there is no going back. Going back means compromise. It means cowardice.

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When we stand for Christ, we're all in. They crucified him. They stoned Stephen. They beheaded James. The rest of the apostles followed suit, as John Foxe tells us in *the Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. Philip was scourged, thrown into prison, then crucified.

Matthew was killed with a halberd. It's a long spear like thing with an axe on the end. Get good, a good momentum in there. He was killed with that. James the less, he was beaten and stoned at the age of 94. And then had his head caved in. Matthias was stoned then beheaded. Andrew, crucified. John Mark, who was Peter's amanuensis, he was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria. Alexandria, at the time, held the greatest library known to the world. Very educated people, very barbaric, though.

Peter was crucified upside down because he considered himself unworthy to die in the same manner that his Lord died. So he requested and they granted the request to be crucified upside down. Paul, the beloved apostle, was beheaded. Bartholomew, he was crucified by idolators in India. Thomas, also died in India. He was thrust through with a spear.

Luke, the man who's written this text before us today, he was hanged on an olive tree. Simon, the zealot, was crucified as well. The apostle John, as I said, he escaped martyrdom but not persecution. He was exiled to Patmos, but the Lord allowed him to disciple and infuse that spirit of courage and bravery and strength into other disciples in the early church, some of the first martyrs of the church.

Ignatius of Antioch, just before he was killed around A.D. 108 by the wild beasts in Trajan's persecution, he said this, "Now I begin to be a disciple. Now. I care for nothing of visible or invisible things so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, the companies of wild beasts, let the breaking of bones and the tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body and all the malice of the devil come upon me, be it so, only may I win Christ." He got his wish.

Polycarp, he was a disciple of the apostle John in his youth. John, an old man, he, a man in his twenties. Toward the end of his life, he was arrested on charges of atheism during the

persecutions of Marcus Aurelius. He was charged with atheism, not because he was an atheist and didn't believe in God, but because he worshiped an invisible God. And he would not bow to the idols of Rome. Roman gods with their man-made idols, he would not bow to them.

And when they said, "Behold, the atheist," he said, "Yes, behold, the atheist." He as standing before the civil authorities an old man and a proconsul pleaded with him, Swear, swear and I will release thee. Reproach Christ. Don't you value your physical health and well-being? Don't you value your safety? Polycarp responded gently. He answered with the courage of meekness just before they lit the flames on his fire.

"Eighty and six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?" Time doesn't allow me this morning to tell anything but, but just simply mention others who showed such great Christian courage. Athanasius, he stood *contra mundum*. He stood against the whole world in face of Arian heresy, denying the deity of Jesus Christ. And he was exiled for it five times for a total of

17 years. He was chased and harried during the best years of his life.

We can scroll all the way through the centuries of church history. And we can speak of John Wycliff, John Huss, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Lady Jane Grey, died as a teenager. Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, John Knox, John Bunyan, John Owen, even Charles Spurgeon, the great Charles Spurgeon cast out of his Baptist union during the downgrade controversy, seeing the intrusion of modernism into the church, which we have suffered the penalty of, I can tell you.

Martyn Lloyd Jones, as well, stood against ecumenism. The list goes on and on and on. And today, I think we can safely add the names of very courageous godly men like John MacArthur and Tom Ascol. We can add them to that list, too. Men who have lost prominent evangelical friends for taking a stand in the face of great compromise and hypocrisy. It's not popular to say that, is it? Because prophets and godly men are generally despised in their own day.

Oh those guys are too severe. They're too serious. They're taking this too seriously. They're only recognized in the pages of church history books as having been bold and having stood firm. But in their own generation, they're pilloried and mocked and scorned. Listen, beloved, may none of us be like the Pharisees, the scribes, the scholars, the lawyers, those who built the tombs of the prophets whom their fathers despised and killed.

Our version of that same sin is to honor Christian courage in all of our history books and commend them on our blogs, wear them on our tee shirts. John Owen is my homeboy. But we oppose the living versions of those same people. Those courageous Christians who, for their stance, make us really uncomfortable in real life. Listen, there's a cost, isn't there, to standing up against hypocrisy? We talked about that last time.

There's no cost for commending yesterday's courage. There's cost for today's courage to stand firm against the actual challenges of our own day and our time. This is where it counts. This is where we need brave Christian men and women. This is why Jesus

told his disciples, as we saw last time in our first point, that religious hypocrisy is dangerous. It's dangerous because religious hypocrites, though they appear to be polite and nice, they really are not that benign because when that mask comes off, it reveals a murderous and violent heart that's been hidden underneath the surface.

When that mask comes off, watch out. Persecution ensues. Murder comes next. The woke social justice protestors, they have war in their hearts. They enter into the church with peace in their, on their lips, but they have war in their hearts. And they have infiltrated the church. They're infecting the ranks of the godly with the leaven of their hypocrisy.

Well that took us to a second point about the, we had the danger of religious hypocrisy. It took us to a second point in Luke 12:1 that religious hypocrisy is contagious. Luke tells us in the meantime when so many thousands of people had gathered together, they were trampling one another. Jesus began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Beware.

Even the bold and brave Peter was infected by this same spirit of hypocrisy and leavened by it, so can we. Beloved, we, too, need to guard our hearts against the sin that underlies hypocrisy, which is the sin of the fear of man. Being really concerned with what other people think about us. It's at the root of all hypocrisy. And there's only one remedy. As we've been saying.

So now that we've unmasked, or watched Jesus, really, unmask hypocrisy, we see what's beneath the mask of polite civil religion, social appropriateness. Now that we're aware of how it permeates and saturates the world around us and even comes into the church. In light of its danger, in light of its contagious nature, Jesus then provides us with the remedy for hypocrisy, verses 1 to 5.

So take a look at it again there. Luke 12:1 to 5. "In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,

which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you've whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed from the housetops.

“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!” There are two more points to make in what is really a two-part sermon, last weeks and this week. Last week was, this is just really an introduction into Luke 12.

As Jesus disciplines his disciples. As he trains them and he trains them in the context and the climate of opposition, of great controversy, of vitriol, of even what culminated in his murder. It was in that climate that he did the best teaching and training. And beloved, we're in such times today. It's time for us to be trained by Christ himself.

Last week, as we went through the danger of hypocrisy, I prayed for our discernment and our protection. This week, I'm asking the Lord to steel our resolve so that we fear God and not man. So that we turn away from every compromise. So that we stand with the faithful. We are friends to those who are truly godly and courageous. That we stand in our own day, that we fight our own fight, and that we are never ever infected with this cowardly spiritual of hypocrisy.

So as we said, hypocrisy is dangerous, dangerous. That's point one. It's also contagious, that was point two. Here's point three. Point number three, religious hypocrisy is fallacious. It's fallacious. It's a fallacy. By fallacious, I mean it's deceptive. It is false. Hypocrisy, it, it thinks and influences according to what is really a myth, what is really wishful thinking. To imagine that our secret thoughts and motives, our private conversations will never ever come to light, that is folly. Because the Bible is abundantly clear, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

Alfred Plummer puts it very simply. He says, "Hypocrisy is useless. For one day there will be a merciless exposure. It is not only wicked, but senseless." Notice how Jesus leads us into this point to see how hypocrisy is fallacious. He leads his disciples into the fear of God in this way in verse 2. He's showing them what God does by nature. This is the kind of God that we have is to do things like this. This principle.

Verse 2, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be made known." So who is behind the passive verbs there? Who is doing the revealing? Who is making the hidden things known? God is, right? He's the only one that can do that. He is the one responsible for the action in those passive voice verbs, covered up things being revealed, hidden things being made known. Who can do such things but God and God alone?

He sees into your heart. He sees into what you do in private, how you think, what you speak, what you say. And he sees it not just for you, singular, but you, plural, and everyone in the whole earth. And why does he do that? Why does he intend to

reveal and make known things that have been concealed or hidden from view? Is it because he delights in embarrassing people? No. It's because it is his nature to reveal. God is a revealing God, who makes things known.

He delights, in fact, in the light of revelation. He loves to bring things into the light. And when we follow that same pattern of bringing things into the light, we bring glory to God. As we read in John 3:21, "Whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. Whoever hates the lights stays away from it." They stay in the darkness, or they put on the mask of hypocrisy, right?

Revealing and making things known is what God has done from the very, very beginning. He delighted in creating light. That's what he first spoke into reality, into existence. Genesis 1:3, "In the beginning, God said, let there be light and lo and behold, there was light." Then verse 4, "God saw that the light was good." The light is a reflection and, and, an extension of

his own internal goodness. His intrinsic goodness is known in light.

Light, which is majesty. Light, which is purity. Light, which is holiness. And now, in the light, on earth, because of the light, everyone can see plainly God's glory by what he has created, right? Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." And the psalmist there, David, points to the orbit of the sun, where the light goes around and shines and makes everything known and seen in the entirety of creation.

It's through creation and what we can see because of light that God's invisible attributes, Romans 1:20, "namely, his eternal power and divine nature, they've been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." We can see God's invisible att, attributes, his eternal power, his divine nature because of light. Because of what light reveals. See it from what he's made.

But listen, we need his revealed words, his words, to understand the meaning of what he's made. We can see it, but we need him to tell us what it means. We need him to be our divine interpreter of what is. We see that in creation. We see that in providence. We see that in redemption, that the infinite wisdom of God is on display in creation, providence, and redemption. It's on display, but it's only known and seen for what it truly is by those who fear God and trust him.

Because those who do not fear God, don't perceive any of it. They're as blind as the animals. They roam and root about the earth looking for their next meal. Just simply trying to scratch and make themselves feel good. That's all that unbelieving people do. God did not create us to be like the animals, just simply looking for the next meal, the next rest, the next feelgood thing. God created us in his own image to reflect his glory. To see his wisdom on display in creation, providence, redemption.

So those who fear God, those who trust him, they're privileged to see and perceive God's wisdom, to know it and to understand

it and to worship him for it. God loves light. He loves to reveal. He loves to teach. He loves to explain. He loves to make known. "This is the message," 1 John 1:5, "The message that we have heard from him," Jesus Christ, "and proclaim to you that God is light, in him is no darkness at all."

So what Jesus is teaching us, right here, in the passage in front of us, that God is light. In him is no darkness at all. And anything that is in darkness will one day be lit up. Nothing currently concealed, nothing currently hidden is going to remain that way, everything comes to light. Back in verse 2, there, those who conceal things, there's an intentionality that's implied in the verb there, *synkalopto*, which means to con, conceal, to cover up completely.

So it's like an intentionality to make sure it stays covered up. Those who intentionally conceal, like hypocrites, they find themselves opposing the very nature and essence of God, who by his nature, by his essence, is a revealing God. He loves to show things. They work against him. They act contrary to God's nature. Revealed there is the word *apokalypso*, *apokalypso*. We

get the word apocalypse from that. You, usually you think of like nuclear apocalypse, some huge destruction.

We get that from the book of Revelation where we see destruction recorded in the book of Revelation. But revelation itself is an *apokalypso*. It is God revealing. It is called from the very beginning the revelation of Jesus Christ. So *apokalypso* is an unveiling, a revealing, a revelation. That's what we see here. That's God's doing.

Hypocrites are opposing the all-powerful, Almighty God, who intends and will not be stopped, but he intends to reveal what they so desperately try to conceal and to hide. Notice the double negative there. "Nothing covered up that won't be revealed." "Nothing hidden that won't be made known." Double negative there just stresses the certainty of this truth, the certainty of this principle.

Based on that certainty, now look at the implication of this. We know the principle. What's he, what does it mean for us? There's a, therefore, in verse 3, which tells us the implication.

"Therefore what you've said in the dark shall be heard in the light and what you've whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." That word is literally preached. Housetops, flat up there. They, that's where if you want to make news known, go up on the housetop and you preach it, and your neighbors are going to hear everything.

In the first case, saying something to somebody under the cover of darkness, this hints at the kind of things that are the subject of the conversation, kind of things being spoken of. Content of these little secrets. The subject for which darkness is a very fitting metaphor, whether it's gossip or slander, or hatred, jealousy, envy, all these things that are spoken. These are done at dark and devious places in the heart. And they come out in private speech. They're spoken of course in the strict of confidence. I've got some, don't tell anybody, right?

In the second case, whispered in private rooms literally the expression, whispered, is to speak into the ear. That gives you, as you imagine that, speaking into the ear the right picture, right? And they do this speaking into the ear in the private

room, in an inner room. One that's not in Israel in those walls there, not adjacent to an exterior wall. A wall that thieves could dig through and get to goods and stores.

This is an inner room, a private inner room where people stored their goods, their treasures, hidden from the outside where thieves could not burrow in and get what they wanted. So you have these walled in interior rooms for storing goods and treasures and valuables. Secretive locations, perfect places for whispering secret things, right. And the darkness provides good cover for speaking about things you want to keep hidden from the eyes and ears of others. Works well when you're talking about preventing any unwanted human attention, right?

What did hypocrites failed to account for? God's listening. God is there. God is all-seeing, all-knowing, ever-present. He's there in the inner room, where you think it's private. You think, oh, I'll escape into my heart. No, he's there. Sin of hypocrisy, like, like all sin, really, sin of hypocrisy blinds people.

As I like to tell my kids growing up, hey, kids, sin makes you stupid. That's why you're reasoning this way. So, stop it. Sin makes people stupid, makes us stupid, right? So hypocrites are stupid. They fail to take God into account that they're whispering here. Think that God doesn't have ears. He who created the ear, does he not hear? He created the eye; does he not see? He who created your mind to process, does he not know?

In the words of Elihu, Job 34:21, 22, "God's eyes are on the ways of man, and he sees all of his steps." All of them. "There's no gloom or deep darkness where evil doers may hide themselves," Elihu says. David, in one of our favorite psalms, right, Psalm 139, he says, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence?" And then he says this in verse 11 and 12, "If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night.'" Doesn't work. "Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you."

God is omnipresent. He is omniscient. In plain language that means God is everywhere and he knows absolutely everything. Only

a fool can think that he can get away with doing, saying, or thinking anything that God's not going to know about. And not later in some moment of revealing. He knows it immediately. Remember, though, Jesus is not speaking here only to great fools. He speaks, verse 1, to his disciples first.

He delivers this warning to friends, verse 4. And he's giving this warning not in a spirit of rebuke, as if they're doing this right now. He's doing it with a voice of caution, warning, admonition, like us parents telling our kids to stay away from danger, stay away from these kinds of strangers. Stay away from, don't play in the street. All the rest. He's thinking of his disciples, his children here, his brothers, sisters. Watch out.

Second person plural there in verse 3, "You, whatever you have said in the dark...whatever you have whispered in private rooms." That's a warning for us Christians. That's a warning for us disciples. And another, I just, just think about it beloved, this applies to you, too. It applies to you. Try as you might to keep things quiet, to keep things out of the light, it is in vain because God loves to proclaim truth.

He loves to proclaim the truth about all things. Everything in broad daylight. And he turns up the volume to a level ten. "No creature is hidden from his sight," Hebrews 4:13, "But all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account." Now for us as Christians, let's think about this. This is both a warning and comfort, isn't it? It's a warning and a comfort.

Proverbs 28:13 says that, "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them, he'll obtain mercy." So there's a warning here and a comfort. For those who are concealing sin, this is a very clear warning to repent. It's a warning to confess and forsake your sins. Paul says, Romans 2:15-16, that "The work of the law is written on your heart, and your conscience bears witness to the law of God." On that day of reckoning, your thoughts are going to serve as a witness for the prosecution, not the defense. To accuse or excuse you from his prosecut, prosecutorial case that he's making against your sin.

"On that day when," according to my gospel, "God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." It's all going to come out. When Christ returns, there will be a day of reckoning. And he will bring to light the things now hidden in the darkness. 1 Corinthians 4:5. He will disclose the purposes of the heart. There will be no escape from that Great White Throne of judgment.

Revelation 20:11 to 12, where there will be a general resurrection of all mankind. Every human being, unbeliever and believer will all be raised. "The dead, great and small, they will all be standing before the throne. The books are going to be opened before them, before God the judge to be judges by re, what is written in the books according to what they had done."

That day of reckoning is coming. So now before it's too late, I plead with you, confess your sins, forsake your sins. Put your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Trust him. Trust him. He's reliable and trustworthy. He's altogether beautiful and glorious. There is no greater savior. He's the only Savior, the only king, really, who would die for your sins.

He died on the cross, suffering a terrible death at the hands of sinners. He suffered the full wrath of his Father. Follow him as the one true Lord who will never fail you, whose word itself is truth. He demonstrated his love by dying for you. Give up trying to conceal your sins from an all-seeing God. Confess your sins. Forsake your sins. And trust in Jesus Christ. That's what God would have you do. That's what he'd have you do in worshipful obedience to Christ. Walking step by step with the Holy Spirit.

For those who are confessing and forsaking sins, this is what Christians do, we're gonna steer clear of hypocrisy. If we confess our sins and make it a regular habit to confess and forsake our sins, we will steer clear from hypocrisy. Cleaning out leaven from our lives is a regular habit. This is what Christians do. We are repenters. We are continually repenting. We don't become self-satisfied and say, yesterday's repentance and confession is enough. We say it happens every single day.

We confess our sins to one another. We confess our sins to God. He's pleased to forgive. Why do we, why do we do this as a

regular habit of our Christian faith? Because at one time, we were darkness. But now we are light in the Lord and so we walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:8. Just as it's God's nature in his essence to reveal and to bring things to light, now as his children, we reflect the image of our Creator, right? And so we walk as children as light. We don't, we don't walk in darkness. We walk in the light. We pursue the light.

We sincerely believe what Jesus says here in verses 2 to 3 that everything will be revealed. Everything will be made known. We know that everything we've said in the dark it will be heard in the light. What we've whispered in private rooms is gonna be the subject of a sermon from a housetop. So instead of hiding the sinful things we say, we confess those things as sins and we repent and we forsake them.

As believers, we're confessing our sins all the time. We know, 1 John 1:8, that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," greatly. "The truth is not in us." So we don't do that. We know, we know before God, we know before Christ. We admit our sin. We refuse to hide it, refuse to conceal it. And we embrace,

instead, the promises of 1 John 1:9 that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

You know the beauty of that promise? We're being asked to confess the sins what, that we know about right? You can't confess what you don't know. But don't make the mistake of thinking that what you know is all the sin you've committed. There's a whole lot more there. And even a sin of an outbreak of impatience toward somebody, that's just the top layer of the onion. You start peeling away layers and layers and layers, you find pride and ugliness and envy and jealousy, wrath, ewe, yu, ewh.

Throw those bad onions away. But you, you have it in you. So what's the promise of 1 John 1:9 is that you confess the sins that you know. He's faithful, faithful to his word to forgive those who come to him. He's just, that is he doesn't let that sin go. He doesn't sweep it under the rug. He doesn't say, I don't pay attention to that anymore. He actually is just to punish it. Where'd he punish it? In Christ.

So God is faithful, he's true to his Word. He's just. He never lets one sin go, but every single sin paid for by the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. So God is faithful and just not only to forgive us of the sins we do know, but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's comprehensive. And at that moment, whatever we don't know, he's cleansing us from it. Isn't that a good word? That's full complete relational reconciliation with our God. That's what's promised there.

The God who knows all, sees all, is everywhere and can hear our hypocrisy, he can hear our comments spoken in the dark. He can see our deeds done where we don't want anybody else to see them. He'll forgive even those things that we're not aware of. Good news. Good news. That's why it's called the Gospel. It's good, good news.

I want you to go back just quickly to Psalm 32. We were there earlier in our service. Read that. This is how I hope each one of us will apply this point. David writes, verses 1 to 2 that "Blessed," blessed, happy, joyful, overjoyed, "is the one whose

transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." Oh, my friend when you grow in your understanding of the truth, when you grow in your understanding of what you truly look like before a holy God, you see your sinfulness. You see your great wickedness; you see that it goes deep down.

When you find out that transgression's forgiven, that your failure to love and worship God and fear him, your failure to love one another, love other people, that that's forgiven, your sin is covered, you are rejoicing! "Blessed is the man," verse 2 whom the Lord, "against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit," there it is, "there is no deceit." What is that? The spirit of hypocrisy, isn't it? To deceive others.

If there's any sweeter inducement to confessing sin that can be found, I don't know of it. Our transgression forgiven. Our sin covered. Even the sin of hypocrisy and lies. What a promise! But for any heart still deceived, still hardened by sin, still blinded by hypocrisy, consider what David says in that next section. "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through

my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as in the heat of summer."

I've spent some time in deserts. I've seen what the sun can do in baking things that really, well, like dead things. Things that, like us, like our bodies that are mostly water. Now what the sun does to a living being that's died in the desert and all the water is sucked out. And so what David is saying here, "My strength gone." It's like being baked in the desert. Yet verse 5. "I acknowledged my sin to you, I did not cover my iniquity," I did not play the hypocrite anymore; "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

Isn't that good? If you go through a spell where you're staying away from the Word, not often in prayer, and you find this heaviness and groaning, you find you have no strength, you have no energy, you have no life in you. You find yourself actually getting more and more soured inside. Your speech is more acerbic; your patience wears thin quicker. Check yourself. Ask

some serious questions. Hmm, am I failing to acknowledge something to the Lord? Am I failing to confess sin?

Is everything I'm trying to do turning into ash and dust before me? Do I feel like the worlds against me, like everything's hemmed in, like the, like the sky above me is bronze and my prayers aren't getting through? Think about entering into his gates with confession, thanksgiving. David knows, like all the godly know, that our hearts can be, for a time, deceived.

We can be, for a time, blinded in God, by his chastening grace for Christians, chastening grace, he allows our sins to rot us out on the inside. In order to move us to confession. Because he cares. Because he loves. That we might experience the loving grace of his, of his free forgiveness. With God, there is forgiveness, Psalm 130, verse 4. "With God there is forgiveness that he may be feared." That he may be rightly worshiped for his mercy and his justice, that he might be worshiped for his grace and his perfect righteousness.

This is why the full exposure of all things provides both a warning and a comfort. It is a comfort for those who've confessed and forsaken their sin. Psalm 32, verse 10. "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!"

Listen, this is a comfort for us. Turn back to Luke 12. Now here you can see Jesus' words in the context, more in the Bible's clear teaching that religious hypocrisy is based on a total lie. It is a fallacy. It's a very dangerous fallacy, very dangerous fiction. It is a, absolute folly to think that God is not going to expose our sins. One day there will be a merciless exposure and only believers who confess their sins, who refuse hypocrisy, will have all their sins taken away and forgiven, never to be exposed or brought up again.

Just make another footnote here about comfort. There are many things that have happened to many people that have been very, very bad. Horrendous. And in a very dark and foul world, filled with sin, filled with abusers and abused, there are many people

who have been hurt by the and victimized by the sins of other people perpetrated upon themselves. Whether it's on their body, whether it's on their mind, whatever it is, there is sin that abounds in this sin-saturated culture. This sin-celebrating culture. And it's only getting worse.

I was talking to one of our church members. He's telling me there are posters down in Denver right now celebrating polyamory. Polyamory is marrying multiple people. So we're returning to polygamy. Returning to polygamy, as if that's a good idea. Biblical record is filled with example after example that marrying more than one person is a very, very bad idea. You think marriage to one sinner is hard? Try multiple sinners.

Not only that, but you know what's on the rise? Pedophilia. Posters of men holding hands with young children, and it says, "Love knows no age." We've heard all this. We've all this, heard all this on the gay rights posters. Now we're being pushed more and more into moral decline. You think it's gonna get better for victims of sin or worse? Let me tell you why it's a comfort that God will bring everything into the light.

This is God's justice. Not one of those offenses is ever overlooked by God. Someone can abuse people all their lives, go to jail, hang themselves, or commit suicide or whatever other manner. And they escape human justice, right? What do they do? They kill themselves to escape the bar of human justice and they stand before the bar of divine justice. They've gone straight out of the frying pan and into the fire. And it's an eternal fire with eternal consequences.

So I just want to say a word to all of you who have been hurt and victimized by someone's sin against you, against your person, against someone you love. It is not forgotten before the Lord. It's known. It's seen. It's a hard thing to do, but Christian charity wants to see of the victimizer, the grace of Christ. They might find escape as we have. That their sins, too, may be forgiven, as ours have. It's a hard truth. But that's what this text is teaching us. It's the implication.

The exhortation to confess and forsake sin only registers with those who fear God, right? Only those who fear God pay attention

to this. This is the key. And so to promote the fear of God, Jesus gives us a fundamental reason for fearing God in the fourth point here. Jesus is telling us hypocrisy is dangerous, contagious, and fallacious. But to drive us farthest from this deadly influence of hypocrisy, he intends to seal our conviction and steel our resolve.

Number four, religious hypocrisy is egregious. Egregious. E-g-r-e-g-i-o-u-s. Egregious means it's conspicuously bad. It's utterly offensive. Hypocrisy is utterly offensive to God. That's how he sees it. Which is why religious hypocrisy receives an even hotter wrath than just secular hypocrisy. It'll receive the full vent of God's anger. And if we digest this final point, we'll not only be safe from the danger of hypocrisy, inoculated against its infection, discern the fallacy of religious hypocrisy, but we'll escape God's wrath against the egregiousness of this sin of religious hypocrisy.

Jesus says, verses 4 and 5, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body," I might even put a parenthesis in there. Those who kill the body or anything that can kill the

body, including viruses. "Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"

Now we know here that Jesus does not explicitly say, "Hypocrites to go hell," but that is implicit, clearly implicit, in his warning here. Hypocrisy is such an egregious sin that it merits the penalty of eternal hell. You say, preacher, you trying to scare me? Listen, my job is to be clear. This text is frightening. Okay. My job is to be clear. Being absolutely clear about this. I gotta tell you, it really does sound like Jesus is trying to scare you.

You say, well, listen, using fear tactics, that's not gonna work. That's not good evangelism. Scaring people out of their wits never leads to sound thinking and good decision making. And I answer to you, well maybe you know better than Jesus, but it seems to me, Jesus knows what he's doing. He's intentional about this. This is not a flippant comment on his part. He does not intend, intend here to scare us out of our wits, but into our

wits. And sometimes we need a good scare, don't we? To realize danger.

He intends to scare us into our right minds so that we're thinking straight. Listen, he is not playing. As I said, accountability only matters to those who think they will one day give an account, right? It only matters to those who think they're gonna give an account to someone they need to be afraid of.

I was talking with a non-Christian, recently, and asked him, "To whom are you accountable?" And he said, "To myself." In an age of autonomous self-worship, that's what everyone thinks. That they just, they just owe no one but themselves and explanation. They just gotta live with their own consciences and that's the measure of their, the standard of their accountability, it they can live with themselves.

The self is the highest authority for the modern age. This false god worshiped in the cult of individualism, this cult of a secular liberalism. This is how everybody thinks. I am my own

authority. I will give account to myself and myself alone. It's interesting because like everyone, non-Christians who think like that, they fear as well. They fear things. They fear a lot of things. They just fear the wrong things. They don't fear God. They don't fear the one who truly matters. Physical safety means nothing when your immortal soul is at stake.

Four times in just two verses here, Jesus uses the word, the verb *phobeo*, to fear, to be afraid, to become frightened, to become alarmed. Once Jesus tells us who not to fear, once he tells us whom we should fear, and in telling us whom we should fear, he commands twice, fear him. He commands. This is not the place to translate this verb as, reverential respect or awe or anything like that. Jesus is telling us to fear the one and the only one who has the power to put our lives in mortal and immortal danger. Fear him.

Now remember, Jesus is saying this, he's calling those to whom he speaks this word of warning. He calls them friends, friends. He's not threatening his friends. He's warning them. He's admonishing his friends. Because the consequence are so grave

for those who follow the lies and the hypocrisy of false religion. Be warned, my friends. It's the friends who will hear the warning.

Those who are not his friends, they'll continue on their way. Matthew 23:15, Jesus says, "Woe to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across the sea and land to make a single proselyte, when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." It's so dangerous. The thinking, the behavior, teaching, lifestyle, the infectious influence of false shepherds. False pastors. False elders. False church leaders. Our churches, they call themselves Christians churches across our landscape are filled with people like this.

And all of this is so dangerous, beloved. It, it just, it gets at me, and it gets at all my pastoral and shepherding sensitivities because it's just like rubbing my nerves raw to watch people like lemmings follow those false shepherds off cliffs. And to hear even some, some people I dearly love, say, oh I know that church isn't all that, you know, but it's okay.

But you know, at least they're getting religion. What?!

Beloved, stop that. This is for keeps. So Jesus admonishes his friends. True disciples. Real friends stay far, far away from that cliff and those shepherds and those influences. Get away from them. I often ask people especially in the context of pastoral counseling setting, what are you most afraid of? Ask 'em what do you most want, which reveals one thing. I say, what, what, what are you most afraid of? What fears to do you have?

Get all kinds of answers. Losing my job. Losing my wife. Losing my family. Losing relationship with my kids. Losing influence in their lives. Having an unhappy marriage. Failing to find meaning and significance. Not fulfilling expectations. Losing friends. These days in the context of the corona virus, civil unrest, radical changes in our political situations. All these fears are heightened about our physical safety, our comfort.

One of the, I guess, 18 Kathys or how, whatever the number is up to in our church of number of people named Kathy. She sent me an article open with this insightful paragraph. Quote, "There is

nothing inherently wrong with desiring safety and enjoying comfort. But the rather obvious statement to make is that the world is not safe and comfortable. It is, after all, dangerous business going out your door. The world is full of nasty pitfalls, trials, sufferings and things like diseases, pestilences, plagues and even pandemics. The world is teeming with those who wish to do you harm and things to be harmed by.

"Yet the world has always been this way, to our memory. Only two people ever experienced true safety and comfort. Yet they invariably traded this away in their quest to be like God. Since then, the world has always been one step away from total political upheaval or natural cataclysm." End quote. So true.

Dying is not the worst thing that can happen to you. Corona Virus infection, not the worse thing. A leftist democratic, socialist, or even Marxist government is not the worst thing. All rights of the U.S. Constitution stripped away, property taken from you, job loss, and no more ice cream. That is not the worst thing. And death, not the worst thing. Not the worst thing that can happen to you.

And my concern is that many, many aren't even afraid of those things. They say when it comes to the big fights, I'll be there. I'll be ready. My concern, concern is the people that succumb to a much lesser danger, the threat and the fear of being unliked, being unfriended, being deflated, de-platformed. Not being listened to. When you walk up to the circle of friends and they kind of turn away from you, change the subject.

Christians have caught a very nasty virus that makes them pander after the world's approval, makes them sensitive to all the world's criticisms. They've become approval seekers, people pleasers. They just can't let others down. It's an infection that's called cowardice. Beloved, losing friends, family, influence, that is not the worst thing either, beloved. And get used to it because it is gonna happen, happen. Jesus came to bring a sword on the earth, to divide us. We talked about that last time.

So stand firm. Beloved, let your hearts take courage because we know the truth. We know it. The worst thing is that after dying,

it's for a soul to be cast into an eternal hell. Jesus says there in verse 5, rather starkly. He doesn't add any sugar to this: I will warn you whom to fear. "Fear him who after he has killed has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."

I'll tell you a bit about this place Jesus is describing because too few in our day seem willing to make people unconformable by talking about something as unpleasant as hell. And far be it from me from, after telling you we all need to be courageous, to back away from something difficult like the doctrine of hell. It's shortsighted and fundamentally unloving for us as Christians to back off of this doctrine. Because when we understand the horror of eternal hell, it's like preventative medicine. We don't like taking it, but we sure do need it. And so does everybody else.

The term translated here as hell, is *geenna* in the Greek. *Geenna*. *Ge* is the Greek word for land and *enna* is a transliteration for the Hebrew word *hinnom*. So *ge hinnom*, land of *hinnom*, refers to an ancient land marked by the Valley of

Hinnom, the sons of *Hinnom*. Joshua called it the Valley of the Son of Hinnom in Joshua 15:8 and 18:16. And that valley was used to mark the boundary line between Benjamin to the north and Judah to the south.

The valley is located just south of the city of Jerusalem, south of the hill of Zion. It curves around to the west. It was originally, evidently, a very beautiful valley, one where people would go to find rest and repose, shade. It's what one commentator describes as a fresh and pleasant valley to the south of the hill of Zion where were found in early times, the kings' gardens. Ancient kings in idol times visiting that valley for rest and relaxation let their hearts drift into idolatry.

High place was built there for idolatry. The valley became known as a place for the worship of the horrid, horrid god Molech. William Hendriksen writes this, he says, "The place was subsequently called, 'Tophet.' Tophet, meaning, according to some, a place of spitting out, or abhorrence. According to others, a place of burning. Either interpretation would fit well.

"It would seem that the top of this high place there was a deep hole in which," mud, "much wood was piled and that this wood was ignited by a stream of brimstone. The wicked," that's sulfur, like going up to Yellowstone and seeing the sulfur coming out of the earth. "Wicked kings Ahaz and Manasseh actually made their children pass through this terrible fire as offerings to the gruesome idol, Molech." End quote.

To facilitate this horrid act of idolatrous worship, children passing through the fire, there was this monstrosity erected there, an idol, representing the god Molech. One author provides this graphic description. "Some archeologists say that the Molech idol and *Ge ben-Hinnom* was equipped with outstretched canty levered arms that extended a small platform on which an innocent baby was tied and slowly to the," patform, "platform would swivel, poured the consuming flames as the baby shrieked in helpless agony."

We're horrified by that description, aren't we? How could any parent do that? And then I think, oh, wait a minute. Abortion.

This is what idolatry looks like. Killing babies, which is why the good king, Josiah, righteously indignant, he tore down these altars and destroyed the high places. Josiah then proceeded to ritually defile the Valley of Hinnom to discourage any other idolators from ever, ever returning there to their idolatry. How did he do that? Well he took this once beautiful valley, he turned it into the city's dump. He used it for sewage and trash and rubbish collection.

Plummer tells us there was refuse of all kinds including carcasses of animals. Carcasses of criminals thrown into this valley and consumed by fire, which was ceaselessly burning. From Josiah onward whenever people came near to that Valley of Hinnom, they could see the flames burning the trash and burning the carcasses and, like we know here in Greeley, you could smell the rancid smell of burning carcasses and blood.

There's a Washington Post article entitled, *Hell on Earth*, written by Edwin Black. He shows this reputation of Valley of Hinnom, *Ben-Hinnom*, *Ge Hinnom*, *ge*, *Gehenna*, persist, has persisted all the way into modern times. He describes the place

this way. Be, quote, "Below the old city walls in Jerusalem, there's a ravine that begins with a gentle grassy separation between the hills and then quickly descends south into the rocky earth. Eventually the ravine becomes a steep craggy depth, scarred on its far side by shallow caves and pits, pocked by hollowed out chambers and narrow crypts.

"Everywhere you see scorches and smolder from trash fires. Rivulets of urine trickle down from open sewers at the cliffs above, watering thorn bushes, weeds, and unexpected clumps of grass among the outcroppings. You smell the stench of decaying offal. The congealed stink of putrefied garbage and the absorbed reek of incinerated substances seared into the rock face. Crows circle low. Worms and maggots slither throughout.

"Listen, imagine," he says, "Some cannot help but hear the tormented screams of babies being burned alive, the macabre incantations of the idolatrous in gruesome celebration. The agonized cries of helpless victims and so many echoes of death and disconsolation that dwell here so pervasively, not even the centuries can silence them." End quote.

That's the picture of hell and Jesus says it's forever.

Description in Isaiah 66:24, Jesus applied that to the Valley of Hinnom when describing hell. Mark 9:48 he says, "Where their worm does die, and the fire is not quenched." He's looking at that place. Everybody listening to Jesus knows that place. It's graphic. The Valley of Hinnom is a physical picture that portrays a spiritual, eternal reality of hell.

Hendriksen says, "By adding these various ideas represented by Ge Hinnom, namely ever burning fire, wickedness, abomination, divine judgment, slaughter." I might pause and add some of those other descriptions: maggots, crows, screams, idolatry, darkness, pagan rituals, incantations, cries of parents. "It is easily seen that this *Ge Hinnom* became a symbol of the everlasting bode of the wicked, namely hell. *Ge Hinnom* becomes in Greek, *Gehenna*, the place of the never-ending torment."

Take a deep breath. Now listen carefully. What I've best, been describing here for the past few minutes, it's just a picture. It's not the reality. It's just the picture of where sinners and

particularly hypocrites will spend all eternity. Whatever the unbeliever, whatever the hypocrite thinks he's getting away with right now in this life, it's gonna catch up with him in the end. On that day, when according to my Gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus, Romans 2:16.

It's a warning. It's a warning for all who will receive it to stay far, far away from hypocrisy and the covering it provides for all sinful hearts. It's a threat to true hypocrites, because you do not fear God enough to heed this warning, you'll perish in this place Jesus described as the place where the worm doesn't die, where the fires not quenched. *Gehenna*.

And the fear of God is the dividing line, folks. Fear God, you'll heed Jesus' warning. Find refuge and safety from an eternal conscience torment of hell. Don't fear God and you'll suffer. And I just want to say at this point, my friend, you've been warned. It's probably a fitting way to summarize all that we've heard today by looking back to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13 and 14.

He writes this, "The end of the matter; after all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man," and then this. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing whether good or evil." Whoever does not fear God will fall eternally, never to recover, never to escape. "The executioner is the one who after he has killed, he also has authority to cast into hell." And so Jesus says, "Yes, I tell you, fear him."

And for those who will fear God now, the executioner puts away his axe, and he holds out loving hands of a loving Father and says, come near. And he embraces us with love and compassion and mercy and speaks to us tenderly. He sends his son to comfort us. He sends his Spirit to strengthen us. And he says, you have nothing more to fear. You fear me, you fear nothing else.

Now we know and embrace the remedy, which is the fear of the Lord, we're ready to hear about the blessings, the benefits of fearing God of comfort from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We're gonna get into that next time.

Let's pray. Father, I want to pray a special prayer of evangelistic interests. That anybody hearing me, whether it's here in our company in this assembly or hearing through the livestream or hearing it sometime in the future. Father, I just pray that you would show grace and mercy to those who, at this point, do not fear you. I pray that what Jesus says here would, would convict, would cut through this false idol of self-autonomy to bring them to, face to face with you in your justice, but also you in your mercy in Jesus Christ.

I want to pray that you would save those who do not know you, those who are sinners, those who are characterized by sin, or even characterized here by hypocrisy. I pray that you be gracious and save because such were all of us at one time. But you were gracious, but you sent Christ, but you opened our eyes, but you caused us to be born again by your Spirit and gave us eyes to see and ears to hear, hearts to receive the Word and understand and be saved.

Father, we show your same grace that you've shown to us, will you show it so many others. I also want to pray for those of us

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for whom you've been gracious to provoke in us the fear of God, that we would turn from our sins, that we'd confess and forsake them, that we'd look upon Christ and embrace him in saving faith. We'd follow him as our loving Lord. I just want to pray that you would strengthen the faithful. All of us at one time or another gives way to cowardice, gives way to other interests. We're distracted by other things.

We don't see things as clearly as we should and so need your grace to abide with us. We need your Word to saturate us, to renew our minds and make us think differently that we might behave differently and speak differently, will different things. So Father, please be gracious to us, your church. Please be gracious to all those who fear you.

We think particularly right now of our Christians friends all throughout the state of California and other states and places where governments are overstepping and usurping the authority of Jesus Christ himself. Father, kings and those in positions of authority laugh at you. They scoff at you. They rebel. They've hearts that slander you and think nothing of your glory. And

yet, Father, as Psalm 2 says, "You have installed your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and, and all authority in heaven and on earth has been granted to him." Authority of the government. Authority of the church. All authority is granted to him. He is the head of all things, including the church.

And so we pray for those bold Christians in other states that are experiencing the, really, what is at this point a mild persecution, but it is a persecution, nonetheless against the church. We pray, Father, that you would strengthen them, let them stand firm. Let them not cave. And I pray that through their example, let them embolden others, as you've emboldened me. I pray that you'd strengthen others and help them to stand firm as well. Father, we love you, we thank you for the grace, for the comfort of your Holy Spirit, for the prayers of Jesus Christ and most of all, for his saving work on the cross. It's and it's in his name pray, amen.