



Two Kinds of Examples

July 8, 2018

Matthew 23:1-4, 23-26

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25).

Jesus taught by word and example, and so did the religious leaders of His day. Jesus always taught and demonstrated the truth, so everyone could trust what He said and live according to His moral example. However, when the religious leaders taught the Law of Moses and expected others to comply with their laws and traditions, they did not always practice what they preached. So, Jesus warned the crowds and His disciples not to follow their bad examples. Everyone is an example of one kind or another, of what to do or what not to do, and Jesus wanted the crowds and His disciples to follow good examples and be good examples for others. Worse, perhaps, are the hypocrites Jesus warned. Hypocrites try to appear as someone they are not. Jesus warned the hypocrites He met that they would experience anguish and distress in the future if they did not change. On the inside, they were full of selfishness and self-indulgence, but they wanted to deceive others into thinking they were honest and upright. Like a dishonest person who wants to take advantage of someone's trust to steal from them, they made themselves appear on the outside as trustworthy and faithful. Jesus forewarned that such people would face the condemnation of God. To avoid God's just judgment, we need to clean ourselves on the inside. To clean ourselves, we need to ask Jesus to turn us from self-centeredness to God-centeredness, to wash us clean and fill us with His Spirit; then, there will no longer be any room for selfish ambitions.

Thinking Further

1. In what places did the teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit? What did that mean?
2. Why do you think Jesus talked about the sins of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees where the crowds and His disciples could hear Him rebuke them?
3. Why did Jesus tell His hearers not to do as the Pharisees did? How might His words be translated into a general principle for everyone to follow?
4. What were some of the heavy, cumbersome loads or burdens that the Pharisees put on the backs of the Jews?
5. What did Jesus say were the more important matters of the Law that the religious leaders neglected?

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