

1. Obey the Pharisees teachings
 - a. We have spent over a month working through two chapters of Matthew's gospel (21-22). During that time we have heard Jesus' harsh words about Israel's lack of fruit (righteousness) and about the lack of spiritual leadership they received from the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - b. We took a break last week for our Stewardship Sunday message. However the gospel message from last week actually provides a bookend to everything we have been taking about for so long. So I moved that passage to this week so I could wrap up Jesus' teaching on those points.
 - c. What we had seen over and over again was that the Pharisees didn't like Jesus because he taught against them. They let their anger at him cause them to try to trap him multiple times. The Sadducees even joined in. Once he had silenced them, they tried to catch him in a legal matter. Finally, even silencing their lawyers, Jesus laid a trap of his own. The Pharisees were unable to answer and therefore went away angry. It said that they never dared ask him any such questions.
 - d. When the Pharisees left, Jesus turned to the crowds and began to teach against the Pharisees and other religious leaders. That is where we are today.
 - e. "Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it."
 - f. Jesus was recognizing the authority of the Pharisees and the religious leaders. Sitting on Moses' seat meant that they spoke with the authority of the Law and the Prophet who gave the Law, Moses. For Jesus to tell the people to ignore the teachings of the Pharisees would have been to get himself in great trouble. So instead he affirmed their authority to teach. Where he challenged them was on how they lived.
2. Don't be like the Pharisees in practice
 - a. "But do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach." And now we are back to the actual meaning of hypocrites. They were actors. They taught something they had no intention of following. Instead, they were pretending to be more holy than they were in order to gain respect. "Obey their teachings, but be nothing like them." That isn't a glowing approval of the religious leaders.
 - b. "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them." Remember how I said that they had taken the Law and enhanced it to a degree so as to make it unbearable. They made the Jewish faith one that would crush the Jew under its weight. Yet the Pharisees did nothing to help those being crushed under the burden, nor did they live faithfully themselves.
 - c. "They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi."

- i. The religious leaders would tie heavy burdens around the necks of others so as to make themselves stand out all the more. The reference to phylacteries and fringes are references to their religious garments. They made sure that their religious clothing stood out so people would notice them. Likewise they would make sure to be in the seats of honor wherever they went. They didn't love being rabbis. They loved the respect they received when people called them rabbis.
 - ii. That they didn't love their position as rabbis as much as the respect that came with it comes out in the fact that they laid heavy burdens on their people and did nothing to help. Being a shepherd of a flock is about caring for the flock, not about burdening them and beating them down.
- 3. Don't live for the approval of others
 - a. Jesus wasn't really pulling any punches as he taught. He was basically telling the crowds that the religious leaders were frauds who only cared about themselves. It is clear why he was telling them to obey the Pharisees' teaching but be nothing like them.
 - b. It is at this point that we get to another one of those passages that is often used by people to teach something that wasn't actually being taught in the passage.
 - c. "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father-- the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah."
 - d. It is very common for Protestants to reject calling a pastor or priest "Father" and to cite this passage. They usually mis-cite it when they do so as well. Usually they say, "I won't call a pastor father because Jesus said to call no one father on earth because you only have one father in heaven." This is a mistake, though. The objection would be better made if one said that they shouldn't call a pastor father because of the first part of the quote- that Jesus said to call no one rabbi for you have one teacher, and you are all students.
 - e. Why do I say this? Because the NT pastor is the equivalent of the Jewish rabbi. The reference to father made by Jesus is not talking about religious leaders, it is talking about our own fathers.
 - f. However, none of this gets to the actual point of what Jesus is saying. As I say all this, understand that I am not lobbying here to defend my own title "Fr. Mike." Personally, it isn't the name I prefer. I just let you guys call me what is most comfortable for each of you.
 - g. Jesus' whole point in this is to not be like the Pharisees. They love titles of honor. And they love being referred to with titles of honor. So don't be like them in living for the approval of others. And don't give them the added respect they are after because they are elevating themselves in a sacrilegious way.
 - h. They LOVE to be called rabbis. They love the title. They love the respect. So don't give it to them because the only one worthy of that kind of respect is God himself. And don't apply the name to yourself so that you don't end up living like the Pharisees, seeking only after the praise of men.
 - i. Jesus then took the point further. Don't even elevate your own father to a point of higher respect than he deserves. While the commandments say to honor your

mother and father, that shouldn't happen to the point where you honor them more than you honor God.

- i. It is worth noting here that father was not a title used for Jewish religious leaders.
- j. Likewise, don't be called instructors (or teachers) because you have one instructor, the Messiah. Again, don't allow yourself to be so proud in what you do that you take glory meant for another- the Messiah.
- k. It is interesting that Jesus tells them two things not to be called- rabbi and instructor- and one thing they shouldn't call another person- father. Jesus was warning them both about how they receive honor (don't be like the Pharisees who use their titles to garner honor for themselves instead of God) and how they give honor to another (don't even elevate your own father to a position higher than his earthly station warrants).
- l. Jesus is known for using hyperbole, and Protestants are known for misunderstanding his hyperbole. If he meant in this passage to never be called by a title or to never call another by a title, even our own fathers, then refusing to call a pastor "father" doesn't get you off the hook. It would seem that father, pastor, teaching pastor, elder, instructor, reverend, or any of a dozen other names all violate the same command. Likewise, the command to not call another father means that you need to come up with a new name for your won dad.
- m. See what happens when we isolate a verse or two and make a doctrine out of it? When this series of commands is put back into its context with the rest of the passage, it seems pretty clear that this is really about what the rest of the passage is about: Jesus' concern that the people of Israel be nothing like their religious leaders.
 - i. Instead of living for their own glory and honor, they should obey the teachings of scripture and live lives that glorify and honor God.
- n. This is the part of the message that really applies to us today as well. We shouldn't be like the Pharisees, laying heavy burdens on the necks of others all while making ourselves look good in the eyes of others.
- o. Instead we should live lives that reflect the God we worship. As Christians, we shouldn't be storing up our own honor, but we should always be pointing people to our loving Father in heaven and to the cross of Christ. We don't want to be the best Christians so that others will notice how great we are. We want to be the best Christians so that others will notice how great Jesus is and how powerful his teachings are.
- p. How we live is how we believe. So don't be like Pharisees and hypocrites. Live for God, love God, and honor him in all you do.