

Lessons from the Pharisees

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Paul, the apostle Paul tells us—we won't turn there; you know it. It's 2 Corinthians 2 and verse 11—that we shouldn't be ignorant of Satan's "devices" as the King James says. The Greek word for "devices" could mean his "purpose" or "purposes." We shouldn't be ignorant of that because he has a purpose to destroy God's people. Remember in John chapter 10, Satan's purpose is "to steal, to kill, and to destroy" in the Parable of the Sheepfold.

And I was thinking if you wanted to turn God's people away from the Truth, two ways come to mind. The first is to water down the Truth. And we've experienced that during the Tkach Era of the Worldwide Church of God. Taking away from the Truth of God, watering it down, changing it, doing away with various truths, laxness in obedience to God's Law and we call that being Laodicean, being lax.

But there's another more insidious way to turn God's people away from the Truth. We tend to focus on the laxness as part of the Laodicean Era, but there's another way that maybe we've forgotten about that we want to talk about today. And that way is more insidious and it's by perverting the Truth by adding to it or subtly changing it in order to be "more righteous," in order to go beyond what God has taught. And, frankly, that leads to being self-righteous.

And we call that—and we've joked about it over the years—as being a Pharisee. "Oh, you're a Pharisee." We joke about that, but Christ in the New Testament, obviously, had plenty of correction for the Pharisees of His day. In fact, all of Matthew 23 is devoted to that. And Christ had plenty to say about the Pharisees. He called them "hypocrites." He called them "blind guides." He called them "fools." He called them "whitened sepulchres." He called them "serpents" and He called them "a generation of vipers." And that's pretty strong coming from our Lord and Master.

So, the question arises, then, if this has a potential to get people off the track, the question arises: Why were the Pharisees in error? Where were they in error? Where did they get off the track? Were they just devout religious men who were unbalanced? Were they just overly strict keepers of the Law, as many people believe? Or, is there something else? Maybe something that we just haven't seen before or we've read right over?

Now in the Church over the years, the word "Pharisee" has been tossed around a lot. In fact, in the Tkach Era, many of us were labeled Pharisees because we didn't want to water down the Law. We wanted to keep the Law. And we were called by those who were following the Tkach's that we were "a bunch of Pharisees." And we didn't want to see the Law watered down. We didn't want to see the Law changed. And we wanted to obey the Law. And so we were labeled "Pharisees," but that label was incorrectly applied. It was incorrectly applied

certainly in our case because those who made the accusations didn't know what a Pharisee was. Didn't have a clue what Pharisee was! And until I studied it, I didn't either.

And if we're not to become modern day Pharisees, then we must know what a Pharisee is so we can avoid becoming one. We've got to understand what Pharisaism was all about. And because that movement, frankly, is alive and well today among some of God's people, it is very important to understand what a Pharisee is so that we can avoid it. So, this sermon is a caution to beware of becoming a Pharisee. The title of the sermon, if you want a title, is *Lessons from the Pharisees*.

So to understand what a Pharisee is we have to take a little bit of time for a brief history. Now, the Pharisaical movement began in the 400s BC. The Zondervan Bible Dictionary on page 647 said, "The name 'Pharisee,' which in its Semitic form means 'the separated ones' or the separatists." They separated themselves apart from the Jewish population. Josephus says, "A body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest and to explain the Law more precisely."—experts in the Law.

The Hastings Bible Dictionary says on page 719—this is very important because this is how it started—"Into the place of the prophet was gradually replaced by the schoolmaster and the drillmaster." So, at the end of the Old Testament Age, what happened was that the schoolmaster, the teachers began to rise in influence in the Jewish community. They were lay teachers and they were called Pharisees. And over the decades, they grew in influence as the priesthood became more and more corrupt. The people could see that and see the corruptness of the priesthood. And, then, the lay teacher because of their strong fervor for God's way and God's Law in their mind, they were the teachers of the Law. And they began to gain influence over the decades. The key is they accepted—these Pharisees, these teachers—accepted the "Oral Law." We'll get into that in just a second. They not only looked to the Written Law, but they accepted the Oral Law.

Now, again, this is a few hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. As you know, the Greek culture influenced all of the Middle East. It influenced the Roman world. The Greek culture influenced language. It influenced dress. It influenced education. Even today, our educational system here in the United States is patterned after the Greek model. That was true in the days of the Pharisees shortly before the birth of Jesus Christ. So, dress, education, language, customs were greatly influenced and especially philosophy because we know the famous Greek philosophers. And they began to influence the Jewish leaders—that philosophy. Over the years what happened is the Jews began to adopt many aspects of Greek culture. And over the centuries, a few hundred years, it began to creep into the Jewish culture. That's a whole sermon in itself and the reaction to that and so forth.

But, obviously, there is a problem because these new philosophies, these Greek philosophies, Hellenistic philosophies as they're called, and their practices could

not be reconciled with the written Word of God. They couldn't be reconciled with the Old Testament writings.

Let me read from The Talmud and the Apocrypha on page 66 by Herford.

The difficulty was to find sanction in the Torah for the new customs and practices which had established themselves in the Jewish community.

So, these customs crept in. And, then, certain people would look into the Written Law of God and they couldn't reconcile these new practices. It's what today would be like Easter or Santa Claus. It creeps into the community. It's commonly observed. And, yet, somebody looks into the Bible to find Santa Claus or to find Easter and it's not there. In fact, just the opposite is there. And that is what was happening in those days in the Jewish community. These Greek customs crept in, but there was no justification for it in the Old Testament writings.

Now these teachers, the Pharisees, found a solution, a two-part solution. First, these influential teachers, called the Pharisees, taught that many of the Greek customs that had crept into society were actually of Jewish origin. So you wallpaper over the fact that they came from paganism and say, "Well, they had to come from the Jews."

Let me read from Rabbinic Essays on page 211 by Lauterbach.

The Pharisees reasoned thus, "It is hardly possible that foreign customs and non-Jewish laws should have met with such universal acceptance."

They just couldn't conceive that something from the pagan Greeks could come into the society, be widely accepted. "That's just impossible," they said.

Going on, he says:

The total absence of objection on the part of the people to such customs vouched for their Jewish origin.

In the opinion of the teachers, the Pharisees! So, it would be like—granted we have more communication today, but it would be like—us saying that Santa Claus has always been part of the United States culture when it wasn't. And we're not that old of a culture compared to the Jews, of course.

So the teachers called these Greek customs that had crept in, they called them "The Tradition of the Fathers." You've heard that before. And they labeled them as a tradition of the Jewish fathers, when in actuality it was creeping Greek culture.

For example, the Pharisees taught the immortality of the soul. You cannot find that in the Old Testament writings, but that's what they taught. And we all know the immortality of the soul came from Greek philosophy. And yet, the Pharisees taught it and they said, "Oh, no. This isn't from the Greeks. The fathers have

taught this for centuries through Oral Law passed down from mouth to mouth, decade to decade."

So that's the second part of the solution. The first part was to say that all these customs were of Jewish origin; the second part that these customs were handed down orally from Moses and were passed down from generation to generation by the word of mouth and were never written down. And so, that's why we have this custom or that custom or the example I just gave of the immortality of the soul.

And this became the origin of the Oral Law as opposed to the Written Law. Let me read again from Lauterbach Rabbinic Essays.

Accordingly, the teachers themselves came to believe that such generally recognized laws and practices must have been old traditional laws and practices accepted by the fathers and transmitted to following generations in addition to the written law. [Emphasis added.]

Now that's the key. We have this Oral Law in addition, adding to the Written Law. And they're parallel. They're side by side, the Written Law and the Oral Law.

He goes on to say:

Such a belief would naturally free the teachers from the necessity of finding Scriptural proof for all the new practices.

You can't find it in the Written Law, but they said, "Oh, but it's here in the Oral Law. It's come down since Moses."

This is why God commanded the following. Let's turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 31. This is all pertaining to the history of the Pharisees. Deuteronomy 31, let's read verses 25 and 26: This is why God commanded this to be done so that no other law would take the place of the written Law or would compete with the written Law. Deuteronomy 31 verse 25, he says:

Deuteronomy 31:25. *That Moses commanded the Levites, (KJV)*

Now remember Deuteronomy was written—this is at the very end of Deuteronomy—Deuteronomy was written just before Moses died and Israel went into the Promised Land. And he's warning them, he's telling them:

Deuteronomy 31:25. *That Moses commanded the Levites, which bore the ark of the covenant of the [Eternal], saying,
26) Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, (KJV)*

Why? It tells us.

Deuteronomy 31:26b. *...that it may be there for a witness against [you]. (KJV)*

"If you get off track, if you start heading in a wrong direction, you pull this book out. You read it and it will tell you what the Truth is." But the Pharisees said, "Well, no. We have this Oral Law also that we must pay attention to." And for those, however, who knew the Written Law and studied the Written Law, there was no excuse. There was no excuse from departing from that Law.

So, in essence what the Pharisees did back a few hundred years before Jesus Christ was born, came to this earth, they did the same thing that the Catholics did a hundred years or so after Christ died and carried on. The Catholics "Christianized" paganism and the Jews "Judaized" the teaching of the Greeks. Same thing—exactly the same thing! And, obviously, Satan was behind both.

Over time, the Pharisees added many, many other laws through their oral traditions. We won't turn there, but the New Testament talks about the Pharisees getting on the disciples about not washing their hands. That's in Mark chapter 7. They added a whole dimension of hand washing up past the elbows that was ritualistic hand washing before every meal. You can't find that in the Written Law, but they added it in the Oral Law.

Christ condemned them also in Mark chapter 7 of washing pots and cups. He says, "You [the Pharisees] do that." Well, Moses never commanded that.

And then the whole notion of "a Sabbath's day journey," which we read about in Acts chapter 1, that was added.

And so, let's understand that over time what happened is the Oral Law began to compete with the Written Law.

Now after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD what happened is the Pharisees began to write down the Oral Law. Obviously, they were afraid that it would be lost somehow and with the scattering of the Jews and the destruction of the Temple. And they began to write it down.

Now, when they wrote it down, it's very interesting how long it was. The result of writing it down, we know today as the Talmud. Now the written Law of the Old Testament was in five volumes. Guess how many volumes the Talmud is? Thirty-four volumes! Now you can see that the Oral Law was far more extensive than the simple Commandments in the Old Testament. And we can see that there was much, much added if you compare thirty-four volumes to five volumes.

Now there's a book of the Talmud called the Temurah, which was written by a Pharisee. I'm going to read from Section 15b.

All the teachers who arose in Israel from the days of Moses until the death of Joseph ben Jo'ezer...

And he died approximately 160 BC. So from the time of Moses to 160 BC, he says:

All the teachers who arose in Israel [from that time] studied the Torah....

That's the first Five Books of the Old Testament.

... studied the Torah as Moses did. But afterwards...

Meaning: after 160 BC.

... they did not study the Torah as Moses did.

Guess what they studied? They studied their own writings. They studied the Talmud. They studied the Oral Law instead of the Written Law. And so these teachers, the Pharisees, came to be, came to feel that they were the ultimate interpreters of God's Law. They were reading their own writings, the traditions of their fathers. And they were the ultimate protectors of the Law and that they knew better than anybody about the Law. And they held themselves up as this huge example of righteousness. And so, this was the environment when Christ grew up and when He began teaching. So, we kind of get a background and an understanding.

So, what we're going to do in the rest of the sermon is look at Five Characteristics of the Pharisees of Christ's day. Then, what we're going to do is see, as we go through each one, see what God's Word says about those characteristics. And then, we're going to apply each one of those characteristics as lessons for us today so we can avoid being a modern day Pharisee because it's very important that we do that.

Okay the First Characteristic of the Pharisees—and when I first began to study this, it kind of boggled my mind because we look at the Pharisees thinking they were the ultimate upholders of God's Law—but the First Characteristic I want to bring out is:

I. The Pharisees did not believe and did not obey God's Law.

Now that may sound kind of weird, but it is the truth. And it is what Christ said. Let's go to John chapter 5 and we'll break in the middle of the chapter, verse 16, just to get the context. And then we'll jump to verse 37 and begin reading. John chapter 5, the Pharisees did not believe God's Law and did not obey God's Law. Verse 16:

John 5:16. *And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to [kill] him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day. (KJV)*

He had healed a man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years. He healed him on the Sabbath day and they did not like that.

Verse 37, Christ is now talking about this and their opposition to Him.

John 5:37. *And the Father himself, which [has] sent me, [has] borne witness of me. [You] have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. (KJV)*

We understand that. Notice verse 38.

John 5:38. *And [you] have not his word abiding in you: (KJV)*

Now, that's a tough pill to swallow for these people who uphold themselves as ultimate teachers of the Law. He goes on to say:

John 5:38b. *And [you] have not his word abiding in you: for whom he [has] sent [referring to Himself], him [you] believe not.*

Then He says:

John 5:39. *Search the scriptures; (KJV)*

Which they didn't do! They were studying the Talmud. He says:

John 5:39. *Search the scriptures; for in them [you] think [you] have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (KJV)*

He said, "Do you think you know the Scriptures? If you read the Scriptures, you're going to see prophecies concerning Me."

Verse 40:

John 5:40. *And [you] will not come to me, that [you] might have life. (KJV)*

Now jumping to verse 45:

John 5:45. *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that [accuses] you, even Moses, in whom [you] trust.
46) For had [you] believed Moses, [you] would have believed me: for he wrote of me.
47) But if [you] believe not his writings, how shall [you] believe my words? (KJV)*

He's saying very plainly, "You don't believe Moses' writings because if you did, you would believe what I'm telling you." And they didn't believe what He was telling them. The Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, they refused to believe. Genesis 3, Genesis 12, Deuteronomy 18, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53—just a handful of the many, many prophecies about Jesus Christ that they rejected and refused to believe. They rejected these words and they did so openly.

Let's go to Luke chapter 7 and we'll read verses 28 through 30. Let's understand that they just rejected words written in the Old Testament. Luke 7 verse 28, Christ says:

Luke 7:28. *For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*

29) *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans [meaning the sinners, the common man, they], justified God [praised God], being baptized with the baptism of John.*

30) *But the Pharisees and [the] lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. (KJV)*

The "counsel of God" was the Written Word of God. They rejected the Written Word of God.

Now, do you see that happening today in the greater Church of God? Do you see people rejecting the plain teachings in the Bible and, then, doing other things?

Well, I think the most pregnant example of that is just not understanding and not believing "the Body of Christ," the teachings about the Body of Christ. And we won't turn there, but in [1 Corinthians chapter 12] we know the Scriptures where Paul says, "But now there are many members, but yet, one body—many members but one body." And he goes on to say, "But now, you are the Body of Christ and members in particular." And, yet people ignore, today in the greater Church of God, they ignore this. And say that "Well, you've got to be in our group, our physical human corporation, in order to go to the Place of Safety," or "in order to be in the Kingdom of God." Implying: that if you're not in a physical corporation, then, you're not a Christian; or implying that the Body of Christ is a humanly devised corporation. That is ridiculous!

It's plain in the Bible. And this is just one little Scripture and we all know this to be the truth and we preach this that there are converted people in every group. There are converted people all around the world. There are converted people who have never heard of Herbert Armstrong, in Russia, South America, Africa. They're members of the Body of Jesus Christ. It transcends human devices and human corporations. And yet, we have plain teachings that people reject—just like the Pharisees rejected—and refuse to acknowledge and refuse to obey to their own hurt.

Now what does God say to us about this characteristic of the Pharisees of not believing Him? What does God say about that? God is very specific. And He says we better pay attention to the teachings in the Bible. We better know them and obey them. Let's go to 1 Timothy 4 and verse 16. Paul is talking to this young minister and giving him some advice that we would do well to apply to ourselves. We have to be very careful, very careful about what we believe and to hold on to what we know to be true. 1 Timothy 4 verse 16:

1 Timothy 4:16. *Take heed unto [yourself, referring to him personally], and [he says, and take heed] unto the doctrine; [and] continue in them [in those doctrines, continue in them]: for in doing this [you shall] both save*

[yourself], and [those] that hear [you, meaning those that you pastor to and that you speak to]. (KJV)

He said, "You better pay attention to the doctrines that are written in the Book and understand them and understand their intent and not twist them or turn them or ignore them." Because, we won't turn there, but in 2 John 10 we know the admonition that if anybody comes to you and "brings not this teaching," brings another teaching, not to even let them in your house. Don't bid them Godspeed. So, we as God's people today need to be very, very careful before we change our beliefs, before allowing some new thing to come in and all of a sudden wham! We change. We do a 180° in a certain aspect of doctrine.

I have continually marveled that when the Tkach's changed the Laws on Clean and Unclean Meats and said, "Nah, that doesn't apply anymore. That's Old Testament stuff. You can eat pork. And you can eat bacon and all that kind of stuff." I remember we had moved back up here from a church in Texas. And we loved the people back there, but we heard that the day that sermon was played that a great number of that congregation went out to a cafeteria and ate pork that very day.

Now what does that say? It says a lot of things, but it says they must have never proved that doctrine. It must have not been embedded in them. And they spent time years before proving that doctrine. So somebody sends out a video of a sermon given in Pasadena. It's played in the local church and they just claim that you can go do this. And then, within a couple of hours, they're chopping down on pork. And it just amazed me that that happened.

And the message is they never really deeply believed or proved that teaching because if that was a part of you that you believed for years or decades, just because somebody stands up and says it, you don't go do it. What you do is you go back and say, "I better go back and study those Scriptures again to make sure that my belief is on track." And sure enough you do and you reject it. Or you reject it out of hand because you have studied it and proved it over and over and over again. And you just know it's wrong and you don't go do that. But if you're in doubt, you go back and study. You just don't go to the cafeteria and start scarfing it down which is what happened.

And so, I want to let everybody know too that all the elders associated with the Pacific Church of God, all of us agree that we need to be very, very extremely careful before changing anything because of the influence of Laodicea and because of what we're talking about today—the influence of a pharisaical movement in God's Church.

So unlike the Pharisees, we need to believe and to put into practice all of God's Word. Not part of it. All of it! So, that's the First Point. We have to obey. The Pharisees did not obey the plain and simple teachings of God's Word. We need to avoid that.

The Second Point, the Second Characteristic of the Pharisees that we want to discuss, is:

II. The Pharisees added and subtracted from the Word of God.

In some areas, they added. Some areas, they took away. They worshipped their own traditions, the Oral Law, and not God's Word. And we have seen, as I've said before, many of those Oral Traditions came from the Greeks. Many of their beliefs came from the Greeks.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 15 and read the first nine verses where Christ gets on them about the fact that their traditions are not God's and not from God. Matthew 15 verse 1, it says:

Matthew 15:1. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, (KJV)*

Now they're getting on Jesus Christ.

Matthew 15:2. *Why do [your] disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? (KJV)*

"Tradition of the Elders," now where did this come from?

Matthew 15:2b. *...for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. (KJV)*

Now, where do you find this tradition—washing up to the elbows in a ceremonial washing? But Christ, being a good Jew, answered a question with a question. He said:

Matthew 15:3. *But he answered and said unto them, [Well, why] do [you] also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
4) For God commanded, saying, Honour [your] father and mother: and, He that [curses] father or mother, let him die the death. (KJV)*

Well, they understood that. Verse 5, He goes on to say:

Matthew 15:5. *But [you] say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever [you might] be profited by me; (KJV)*

Meaning: the father and mother be profited by this gift. Then, He says:

Matthew 15:6. *And [you] honour not [your] father or his mother, he shall be free. (KJV)*

Meaning: free from the Law.

Matthew 15:6b. *Thus [you] have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. (KJV)*

What they were taught is that if a son had a gift—it could be household goods. It could be a piece of land. It could be animals—and he had a gift that if he gave it to his mom and dad, it would help sustain them. It would honor them. It would support them.

But, they taught that if he says, "No, I'm going to dedicate this to the Temple. I'm going to dedicate this to God," then the Temple would have all of that. And, then, he would be absolved from supporting his mother and father by that gift. And so, they circumvented the Fifth Commandment by saying, "No, it's a gift to God." The Pharisees, "We'll take it. We'll take the animals. We'll take the furniture. We'll take whatever it might be."

He goes on to say in verse 7:

Matthew 15:7. *[You] hypocrites, well did [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, 8) This people [draws near] unto me with their mouth, and [honors] me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9) But in vain do [you] worship me [referring to the Pharisees], [You teach] for doctrines the commandments of men. (KJV)*

And, woe unto us if we ever do that! Woe unto us if we ever do that!

Let's go to John chapter 7. And we're going to read verses 14 and 15, and then jump to verse 19 John chapter 7. This is in the middle of the Feast. Christ went up to the Temple and began teaching in the Temple. Obviously, the Pharisees were there. In verse 15 of John 7:

John 7:15. *And the Jews marveled, saying, How [does this man know] letters, (KJV)*

"Isn't He the carpenter's son? How does He know? Who taught Him? He understands the Law and He preaches as an expert on the Law, but He's never been to"—we would say today, "He's never been to seminary? How did He learn all this?"

Verse 19, Christ says:

John 7:19. *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you [keeps] the law? (KJV)*

We read over these Scriptures. He's talking to the Pharisees. "None of you keeps the Law!" Oh, yes they kept the superficial part of the Law. They tithed, as we're going to see in a minute, of mint, anise, and cummin, but they didn't understand the intent of the Law.

Now Christ goes on to explain why. Going on in verse 19:

John 7:19b: *Why [do you go] about to kill me? (KJV)*

He says, "None of you keeps the Law. And, yet, why are you trying to kill me?"
Verse 20:

John 7:20. *The people answered and said, [You have] a [demon]: (KJV)*

Well, that answers all the problems!

John 7:20b. *[You have] a [demon]: who [goes] about to kill [you]?
21) Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, (KJV)*

Meaning: He was referring to the time He healed a man on the Sabbath.

John 7:21b. *...and [you] all marvel.
22) Moses therefore gave you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses,
but of the fathers;) (KJV)*

In other words, circumcision predated Moses. Acts chapter 7 verse 8 tells us that Abraham circumcised Isaac. That goes far before Moses' life.

He says:

John 7:22. *Moses therefore gave you circumcision; and on the Sabbath
day [you] circumcise a man.
23) If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of
Moses should not be broken; are [you] angry at me, because I have made
a man every [bit as] whole on the Sabbath day [by healing him]?*

He says, "You hypocrites!"

Lauterbach in his Rabbinic Essays on page 195 says—notice this:

Many new customs and practices for which there was not the slightest indication in the Book of the Law were observed by the people and considered by them as part of their religious laws and practices.

You could not find it in the Written Law, but they accepted it because it was "part of the Oral Law." It was never written down up to this point.

The Zondervan Bible Dictionary on page 647 says:

The doctrines of the Pharisees included predestination ... (Emphasis added.)

You know you wonder where—we think predestination is kind of a modern Protestant thing or a Catholic thing, but the Pharisees believed in predestination. Where did that come from? The Greek culture.

Going on from The Zondervan Bible Dictionary:

They laid much stress on the immortality of the soul. Being people of the Law, they believed in the final reward for good works and that the souls of the wicked are detained forever under the earth.

That sounds like a Catholic Doctrine to me.

Going on:

While those of the virtuous rose again and even migrated into other bodies.

That's what Josephus said about the Jews and the teaching prior to Christ. You know reincarnation! And you see how far off they got in a few hundred years by devising, listening to their own traditions coming down through this Oral Law. They wanted their own brand of truth. And they, in many cases, pictured themselves even as more righteous than God as we will see.

Now an attempt was made to carry this into the New Testament because we know in Acts 15 verse 1, it says—we won't turn there, but Acts 15 and verse 1, it says—"Certain men came down from Judea and taught" that the Brethren, the New Testament Christians had to be circumcised in order to be saved. And, of course, the Acts 15 conference dealt with that. But there was an attempt to carry on this tradition saying that you have to go to the Pharisees. You have to go to Moses before you could be a Christian. You have to become a Jew before you can become a Christian. And that was, obviously, taken care of right away.

But do you see this happening in God's Church today? Do you see this happening where people add and subtract from God's Law today?

Look at the "Sacred Names." That was a thing that swept through the Church here a number of years ago. It was even resurrected here recently where people say, "Well, no. You can't call God by this name. You must call Him by this name." Or "It's blasphemy to call God by this name, which is found in the Old and the New Testament. You must call Him by this name"—adding, subtracting from the Word of God!

We have people in the greater Church of God today that believe it's a sin to keep Thanksgiving. It's a sin to keep Mother's Day. And even recently, it's a sin to keep the Night To Be Much Observed—if you can imagine that! Adding and subtracting from God's Law.

And then, we have as an example making an entire doctrine out of the teaching of the "Elijah to come." Now there are several groups—and I don't know what sizeable number of people—that believe in this doctrine of the "Elijah to come."

That basically says that Mr. Armstrong was the "Elijah to come" and that when he died in 1986, he restored all things. Therefore, all doctrine was frozen at his death in 1986 and that all of his words are now elevated to the level of the Bible—elevated to what we read in the Bible, the writings of Peter and Paul and John—that all of his words are elevated to that status. And they've created this

entire teaching and this entire doctrine about this "Elijah to come" and people believe it! And, of course, that has a tremendous fall out as far as what people believe or what they don't believe.

Let's go to Matthew 17. Just taking just one Scripture to address this one thing—adding and subtracting from God's Law. We'll read Matthew 17 verses 10 through 12. This is so simple and it is so clear! Yet, people weave an entire doctrine over this subject and begin to change people's beliefs and practices. Matthew 17 verse 10:

Matthew 17:10. *And his disciples asked him [Christ], saying, Why then say the scribes that [Elijah] must first come?*

11) And Jesus answered and said unto them, [Elijah] truly [must] first come, and restore all things. (KJV)

Now, that's true. Christ said, "Elijah has to come and restore all things. And that's what the scribes teach." Then in verse 12, He says:

Matthew 17:12. *But I say unto you, That [Elijah] is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they [liked]. Referring to John the Baptist.] Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. (KJV)*

He plainly said, "John the Baptist was the Elijah to come." And yet, people ignore this plain teaching and add this new giant doctrine to the Word of God that you cannot prove out of the Bible. It is speculation. It is supposition—giant leaps in facts! We see this happening today.

Now what does Christ say about that? What does God say about this characteristic of the Pharisees of adding and subtracting from God's Word? Let's go to Mark chapter 7 and we're going to read verses 7 through 9. Christ was not happy with this practice.

God's Word is very simple and very plain and easy to understand by people who have His holy spirit. Not that we understand everything. We don't. I've got a lot of questions I want to ask God and Christ when, hopefully, we're there and that day comes. And I make into God's Kingdom. I hope! There are some things I don't understand. There are some things I want to know about. Mark 7 verse 7:

Mark 7:7. *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (KJV)*

That's what the Pharisees did!

Mark 7:8. *For laying aside the commandment of God, [you] hold [to] the tradition of men, [such as] the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things [you] do.*

9) And he said unto them, Full well [you] reject the commandment of God, that [you] may keep [to] your own tradition. (KJV)

And we had better take heed to that! Because remember Psalm 19 verse 7? We won't turn there. It tells us "The Law of the LORD is perfect." It's complete. It doesn't need any correction. It doesn't need anything added to it or taken away from it. Therefore, we should not add or subtract from it.

And that's what God told Moses and Moses told the people in Deuteronomy 12 and verse 32. Let's turn there. This is something that we need to pay attention to. Now, this obviously applies to ancient Israel, but in principle it applies to us today because we hold to the Law of God. Deuteronomy 12 and verse 32, we need to burn this into the back of our eyeballs. It says:

Deuteronomy 12:32. *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: [you shall] not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (KJV)*

Now we know Christ brought in a spiritual dimension to the Law in the New Testament and this applies to that too. We can't add to anything Christ said. We cannot take away from anything that Christ said. As I said, we have to understand that God's precepts, God's Law is simple and easy to understand by someone who has God's holy spirit and who has a humble attitude. Not an agenda! And we cannot add or detract from His Word.

The Pharisees wanted to turn the people away from the Truth. What was their motive? What was the Pharisees' motive in adding and subtracting to the Written Law?

That leads us to the Third Point.

III. The Pharisees wanted the people to look to them before they looked to God.

That's a simple fact of the characteristics of the Pharisees of Christ's day. They wanted the people to look to them. Not look to God first.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 6 and we're going to read the first six verses. This is the Sermon on the Mount. Christ is hitting the customs and the traditions of the Pharisees and He's also expanding the Law into a spiritual realm. Matthew 6 verse 1:

Matthew 6:1. *Take heed that [you don't do] your alms before men, to be seen of them: [He said,] otherwise [you don't] have [any] reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

2) Therefore when [you give your] alms [at the Temple], [don't] sound a trumpet before [you], as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have [the] glory of men. [He says, Truly] I say unto you, They have their reward. (KJV)

The "blowing of the trumpet" is the reward. God doesn't reward them. They don't get any marks in heaven when they throw alms (money) into a big pot and you hear the coins jingling around and then somebody blows a trumpet. He says, "That's the only reward they're going to get for that act."

Verse 3:

Matthew 6:3. *But when [you do your] alms [when you give], [don't let your] left hand know what [your] right hand [does]:*

4) *That [your gift, your] alms may be in secret: [so that God your] Father which [sees] in secret shall reward [you] openly.*

5) *And when [you pray, don't] be as the hypocrites... (KJV)*

And the Pharisees used to love to stand and pray in the synagogues. We'll get to that in just a minute.

Matthew 6:5b. *... and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. (KJV)*

That's why we don't offer, when we're at a restaurant, we don't make a big elaborate thing of offering a thanks in a restaurant so that you can be seen of men." We don't do that.

Matthew 6:5 continued. *[He says, Truly] I say unto you, They have their reward. (KJV)*

"Oh, isn't he religious!" "Aren't they religious!"

Verse 6:

Matthew 6:6. *But [you], when [you pray], enter into [your] closet, and when [you] shut [the] door, pray to [your] Father which is in secret; and [your Father which [sees] in secret shall reward [you] openly. (KJV)*

And we'll see that the Pharisees wanted power. They wanted control. And they had great pride in front of God.

The Zondervan Bible Dictionary says on page 647:

Pharisees even wore a distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognized.

"Oh, there goes a man of God."

They pretended to honor God while in reality they were honoring themselves. (ZBD)

They wanted to honor themselves. Look at Luke chapter 16 and we'll read verses 14 and 15.

Luke 16:14. *And the Pharisees also, (KJV)*

Notice what it says here very plainly. Luke 16 and verse 14:

Luke 16:14. *And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, (KJV)*

Not only of money, but of the praise of men.

Luke 16:14b. ...heard all these things: and they derided him.

15) And [Christ] said unto them, [You] are they which justify yourselves before men; (KJV)

"Not God! You justify yourself. You make yourself look good before men. You're not concerned about making yourself look good to God, but before men."

Luke 16:14 continued. ...but God [knows] your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. (KJV)

Now let's cover an example in Scripture where this happened, where they were trying to turn the people's mind away from looking to Jesus Christ and on themselves. Let's go to John chapter 9. This is after the fact—you remember Christ healed a blind man. He had been blind from birth. And He knelt down and spit on the ground. There was clay. He mixed His spittle with the clay and then put it over the man's eyes. And the man was healed. Well, we're coming into the context after that happened. John 9 beginning in verse 13:

John 9:13. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforesaid was blind.

14) And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15) Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon [my] eyes, and I washed, and [now I] see. (KJV)

Verse 16:

John 9:16. Therefore some of the Pharisees [said], This man is not of God, because he [keeps] not the Sabbath day. (KJV)

"This can't be a prophet of God or a man of God or the Messiah because He does this on the Sabbath," to show you how picky they were and how misguided they were. Others, said, the ones with a straighter head, said:

John 9:16b. How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And, [so,] there was a division among them.

17) They say unto the blind man again, What [do you say] of him, that he [has] opened [your] eyes? He said, [Well, He's] a prophet.

18) But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, (KJV)

They said, "Ah, this guy's a liar. He saw before and this is just a ruse!" trying to discredit Christ. He says:

John 9:18b. ...until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. (KJV)

They wouldn't believe the guy. So, they had to go to the parents. See, they're trying to discredit Christ at every turn. They would not believe the plain simple facts. Verse 19:

John 9:19. *[So,] they asked [the parents], saying, Is this your son, who [you] say was born blind? how then [does] he see?*

20) *His parents answered and said, We know that this is our son, and [we know] he was born blind:*

21) *But by what means he now [sees], we [don't] know; or who [has] opened his eyes, we [don't know]: he is of age; ask him: [he'll speak for himself]. (KJV)*

They were kind of—you could tell if you read between the lines—they're getting a little fed up with the Pharisees who wouldn't believe him.

Verse 22:

John 9:22. *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. (KJV)*

We would say today "disfellowshipped." They already had it set up in advance. "Any of our congregation says, 'This is the Christ,' they're out of here."

Verse 23:

John 9:23. *Therefore said his parents, [He's] of age; ask him.*

24) *Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man [referring to Christ] is a sinner.*

25) *[And he] answered and said, Whether [he's] a sinner or [not], I [don't know]: [he says, the only] thing I know, that, I was blind [before but], now I see. (KJV)*

And this man, thankfully, is sticking to the subject. Verse 26:

John 9:26. *Then said they to him again, What did he to [you]? how [did He open your] eyes? (KJV)*

Well, he's already told that. You see they're just picking and picking and picking trying to discredit Christ.

John 9:27. *He answered them, [I've] told you already, [but you didn't listen, you didn't] hear: [he says, Do you want me to say it again? He said, Will you be] his disciples [if I tell you again]? (KJV)*

Verse 28:

John 9:28. *Then they reviled him, and said, [You are] his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. (KJV)*

"We, us, we follow in Moses' footsteps. Look to us."

John 9: 29. *We know that God spoke unto Moses: [but] for this fellow, we [don't] know [where He's coming] from. (KJV)*

Verse 30:

John 9:30. *The man answered and said unto them, Why [then] is a marvelous thing, that [you] know not from [where He] is, and yet he [has] opened [my] eyes. (KJV)*

"How come you don't know?"

Verse 31:

John 9:31. *Now we know that God [hears] not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and [does] his will, him he [hears]. (KJV)*

This is the man, the healed man saying this. Verse 32:

John 9:32. *Since the world began [it's never been] heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.
33) If this man were not of God, he could [not] do [anything].
34) [Then the Pharisees] answered and said unto him, [You were] altogether born in sins, [are you going to] teach us? And [so] they cast him out [of the Temple]. (KJV)*

They disfellowshipped him because they just would not accept the plain and simple teachings of God and they wanted the people to look to them. And Christ was a threat to that. Christ was this walking, living, breathing threat and the people were looking to Him and weren't looking to them. And they were willing to kill Him for that because they wanted more than anything else for people to look to them.

Do you see this happening in the greater Church today? Men wanting people to look to them as the Pharisees wanted the people to look to them? Have we not seen many who wanted to honor themselves rather than honoring God? Men wanting Brethren to look to them, even before God? People politicking to speak or to be ordained or to be promoted so people would look to them?

You feel like a broken record almost because you hear and see people saying, "Well, look to me. I'm an apostle." "Follow me because I'm the trainer of the two witnesses." "Look to me because I'm the only true minister on the face of the earth." "Look to me because I'm the only one that teaches the truth." "Look to me because I'll lead you to the Place of Safety." And, "Look to me"—and this is the most insidious one—"Look to me because I'll tell you what to believe." And that happens. "Look to me because I know the Bible and I will tell you what to believe."

I remember the press got all over George W. Bush because he called himself "The Decider." Do you remember that a few years ago? And he was saying, "I'm the one that decides to press the button or when to launch the military. I'm the Decider."

Well, those who want the praise of men and want men to look to them, they become the "Decider" for you. "Don't read your Bible. Don't look in your Bible. I will tell you what the Bible says. I will write my books or my literature. You read my literature and not the Bible." They want to become your "Decider" and decide what is right and wrong for you. They condemn those who do not agree with them. And in that way, they become the "Truth Police" just like the Pharisees were the "Truth Police." And, frankly, many have been disfellowshipped because they refused to follow that notion. Just like this man and probably his family were cast out of the synagogue because they just said, "Look! This Man healed. Maybe you should think about where He comes from."

Now what does God say about this characteristic of the Pharisees looking to men before God? Well, the Bible—you could do a whole sermon on the Scriptures that say, "Don't trust in a man." Let's go to Jeremiah 17 and we'll read verses 5 and then jump to verse 7. Jeremiah is quoting God—Christ, the God of the Old Testament. He says:

Jeremiah 17:5. Thus [says] the [Eternal]; Cursed be the man that [trusts] in man, and [makes] flesh his arm, (KJV)

Meaning: to look to somebody who is flesh and blood, his strength, his arm.

Jeremiah 17:5b. ...and whose heart [departs] from the [Eternal]. (KJV)

Verse 7:

Jeremiah 17:7. Blessed is the man that [trusts] in the [Eternal], and whose hope the LORD is. (KJV)

And even Christ when He was here—we won't turn there—in John chapter 5, He says, "Of My own self, I can do nothing." He said, "I don't seek My own will, but I seek the will of the Father." And Christ even said, "Look, I'm the conduit. I'm just the *Logos*, the Word. I just speak what God tells me to speak," not trying to exalt Himself above the Father. And so, Point Number Three is that we must always put our focus and attention on God and Christ and not on men and not on ourselves. What God says and what Christ says in His Word are the most important things. Not what a man says about what God and Christ say.

That leads us to the Fourth.

IV. The Pharisees concentrated on the physical aspects of their religion and not on the development of personal character.

They were all about all of the physical aspects, the visible aspects. They thought physical obedience to the extreme would make them superior and they did feel

that they were superior to the average Jew of their day. They thought they could earn God's favor by doing physical works. And we know what Christ has to say about that.

Let's go to Matthew 23 verses 23 and 24 because Christ condemned them on the one hand but praised them on the other hand and we'll see here. I think you know where we're going. Matthew 23 verse 23, He says.

Matthew 23:23. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, [you] hypocrites! [He says, because you] pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, (KJV)*

You know these tiny little herbs. And He'll say in a minute, "That's a good thing, you should do that—pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin." And they would count out nine leaves for me and one leaf for God, and nine leaves for me and one leaf for God. And He says:

Matthew 23:23b. *...[but you] have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought [you] to have done, and not leave the other undone. (KJV)*

We should do both. He says:

Matthew 23:24. *[You] blind guides, [you try to] strain [out] a gnat, and [in doing so, you] swallow a camel. (KJV)*

Now judgment, mercy, and faith, involve the heart, involve the character, involve the spirit. And He says, "You just totally ignore that. You totally ignore the weightier spiritual matters of the Law. And you're focused on these little leaves to the exclusion of the weightier matters of the Law."

So let's ask the question. Do we see that happening in the Church today? Focusing on the physical to the detriment of the spiritual?

Well, this straining out of a gnat and swallowing a camel. There are some people today in the greater Church say that "Christian men must wear a beard with square corners." And, yet, those people who say that—and I know for a fact because I've dealt with it—they condemn those who don't have beards with square corners. And, so, what does the Bible say about judging others, judging your brother? You know the beam in your eye and the speck in somebody else's eye. And they go around and say, "No, Christian men have to wear beards with square corners." And then they condemn others. That's trying to strain out a gnat, obey the tiny little matters of the Law and then swallow a camel by being judgmental in condemning!

And we have people in the greater Church today that focus on the Place of Safety. That's a physical place. "If I can only get to the Place of Safety!" focusing on obtaining passports to get to the Place of Safety. We've had people beat up on little widows because they didn't have a passport. And they were all worried and scared that somehow not having a passport would keep them out of the Place of Safety as though God is somehow limited by this little book and God

was somehow constrained by the book written by the United States that could somehow keep one of His children out of the Place of Safety!

Focus on hoarding food, that's happening among God's people. Focus on hoarding money, that's happening among God's people. And I've even heard through good authority some are focusing on collecting guns to protect themselves when bad times come!

You see how far away we can get when we focus on the physical and not on the spiritual?

What does God say about this characteristic of the Pharisees of concentrating on the physical aspects of religion and not on character development? The Pharisees were a perfect example of keeping the outward aspects of their religion. And you know we read earlier in Matthew 23—well, we didn't read earlier, but we've been in Matthew 23. Remember what Christ said a little later on? We won't turn there for the sake of time. He said, "Woe unto scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites." He called them "whited sepulchres."

And that would be like today a mausoleum where you have a small mausoleum with a crypt in there. Whitewashed on the outside it looks beautiful. And Christ says, "That's the way you are. With your robes and all of that, you look beautiful." But He said, "Inside that crypt is goo and ooze and stink from dead men's bones." And He said, "You're the same way!" He said, "You appear outwardly righteous, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. And so, Christ is saying, "I'm looking at what's inside the crypt. What's in the heart? And what's in the mind?" And they're focusing on the garments they wear to call attention to themselves.

And He was condemning them for that because you see in Matthew 5 at the start of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, "Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees." Now why would He say that if the Pharisees didn't even keep His Law? Well, Matthew 5, 6, and 7—the Sermon on the Mount—tells us how to spiritually keep the Law. Remember Christ said, "If you are angry with your brother, you're a murderer." If you look on a woman to lust after her, you are an adulterer."? He added a spiritual dimension. And He said, "You need to be as righteous and as careful as the Pharisees are in their physical aspect, you need to be that way spiritually"—to watch your mind, to watch your heart, to watch your motives, to watch your intent by implying the spiritual aspects of the Law.

So the key you see, for us today, is to develop holy righteous character, the mind of God, the heart of God through the spirit of God.

Okay, the Fifth and Last Point.

V. The Pharisees over time became self-righteous in their vanity and they looked down on others.

They felt they were superior, as we read in the beginning. And they felt they were the ultimate interpreters of God's Law and if you didn't agree with them or you weren't up to their level or their standards, they would look down upon you.

Let's go to Matthew 23 and were going to read verses 5 through 7. Vanity and self-righteousness, looking down on others; Matthew 23 verse 5, Christ says:

Matthew 23:5. *But all their works... (NKJ)*

Referring to the Pharisees, "All their works, every one of them," He says:

Matthew 23:5b. *...they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments [so people will look to them], (KJV)*

Verse 6:

Matthew 23:6. *[They] love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, (KJV)*

Why? Because "I'm better than you. I deserve this!"

Matthew 23:7. *And greetings in the markets, and to be called, Rabbi, Rabbi. (KJV)*

The Zondervan Bible Dictionary says:

They despised those whom they did not consider their equals and were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of the Word of God.

You see this pride even developed into a feeling of superiority over other people, over other nations and over other races.

The Hasting Bible Dictionary on page 719, it's interesting. He calls them "Jewish Puritans" like the Puritan Movement in the United States.

The Jewish Puritans became a distinct class called the Pharisees or men who separated themselves from the heathen and no less from the heathenizing tendencies and forces in their own nation. They abstained even from table fellowship with the heathen as being an abominable thing.

Remember they criticized Christ because He ate with sinners? They were the ones that did that. And remember when the Jews came to visit from Jerusalem and Peter was with the Gentiles? And he withdrew sitting with the Gentiles and went over to sit with those who came down from Jerusalem because they believed it was a sin to sit with a Gentile. And Paul called him out and criticized him publicly.

Look at Luke 18 and verse 9. We'll read verses 9 through 12.

Luke 18:9. *And [Christ] spoke this parable unto certain [ones who] trusted in themselves [saying] they were righteous, and despised others [referring to the Pharisees]:*

10) *Two men went up into the temple to pray; one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

11) *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. (KJV)*

Not with God!

Luke 18:11b. *[He says,] God, I thank [you], that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican [standing over here, he says].*

12) *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (KJV)*

Setting himself up as being superior!

So let me ask the question. Do you see this happening today in the greater Church of God? Self-righteousness and vanity? Men wanting to look to them?

I had a minister years ago in Worldwide tell me—I've mentioned it before—I said, "What's my job? What do you want me to do?" He said, "Point the people to me. Have them look to me." And that's way off base. The Pharisees wanted that.

And when we follow that through to today, people who say, "We're the only ones with the Truth. I'm the apostle," elevating the head of a certain group to the point of papal infallibility—whether it's Mr. Armstrong or somebody else today that they're incapable of being in an error—that is vanity and self-righteousness. And we have to avoid that! The leaders have to avoid it. All of us have to avoid it.

People who say, "You must look to me. You can't have contact with your own relatives. You can't speak to your children or parents." What an abomination! Vanity and self-righteousness, power and control!

What does God say about this? Well, we were in Matthew 23; we just read that in verses 5 through 7. Let's just continue reading in verse 8 through 12.

Matthew 23:8. *[Christ said, Don't] be called Rabbi: (KJV)*

The Pharisees were saying, "Oh, they love being called Rabbi."

Matthew 23:8b. *[He says, Don't] be called Rabbi: one is your Master, even Christ; and all [of you] are [brothers and sisters]. (KJV)*

Verse 9:

Matthew 23:9. *And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (KJV)*

And it's common in some religions to call a man "Father."

Matthew 23:10. *Neither be called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*

11) *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.*

12) *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (KJV)*

There's one local church where the minister's wife doesn't go into the kitchen to help prepare because she's above that. And, yet, Christ washed the feet of the disciples. They don't believe the Bible, believe in their own traditions.

Luke 18, remember we were there earlier about the Publican and the Pharisee, verse 13 and 14.

Luke 18:13. *And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes unto heaven, but [he beat on his chest], saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (KJV)*

And then Christ said:

Luke 18:14. *...[This] man went down [right with God]: ... [and he who exalts] himself [is going to be abased]; and he that [humbles] himself shall be exalted. (KJV)*

So we should look for humility in our brothers and sisters. And we should look for humility in leaders, because we can't become modern day Pharisees by allowing self-righteousness and vanity and pride to come into our lives. We just can't allow that to happen. We cannot become modern day Pharisees by allowing ourselves to condemn others. We just can't do that.

We've all been guilty of it. I've been guilty of it. Repented bitterly over it.

Okay, let's close.

At the end of the day Christ said the Pharisees were hypocrites. In Matthew 23, He used the word "hypocrites" seven times against the Pharisees. They pretended to be "Oh, so righteous," but their motives were anything but righteous. Their motives were carnal. Their motives were human.

And we are warned not to be deceived. Look at Matthew 16. We're going to read verse 6 and then jump to verse 12. Matthew 16 verse 6:

Matthew 16:6. *Then Jesus said unto them, (KJV)*

He's warning them about the Pharisees. Matthew 16 verse 6:

Matthew 16:6. *Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. (KJV)*

Matthew 16:12. *Then understood they how that he bade them not [to] beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine [or the teachings] of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. (KJV)*

"Watch their teachings. Don't follow their teachings."

Then in Colossians 2, for a final Scripture, we're going to read verses 6 through 8, Colossians chapter 2. Christ said, "Beware of the modern day Pharisee" by extending it to today, "Beware of their teachings. Beware of their doctrines," because they were adding and subtracting. And their motive was vanity and self-righteousness and pride. Colossians chapter 2 verses 6 through 8:

Colossians 2:6. *As [you] have therefore received Christ Jesus the [Eternal], so walk in him: (KJV)*

Paul is saying to the Church in Colossae and by extension to us today. He says, "We received Christ." He says, "Walk in Christ. Not a man. Walk in Christ."

Colossians 2:7. *Rooted and built up in him, and [established] in the faith, as [you] have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (KJV)*

Look to Christ. Follow His example. Verse 8:

Colossians 2:8. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (KJV)*

And you see what the Pharisees did was allow the Greek culture to come in and then they made that part of the Oral Law and they taught it because they didn't, then, have to go to look into the Written Law where the Written Law would either condemn it or would be silent about it. And we're being told today, by extension, "Don't let anybody fool you through philosophy and vain deceit.

So, let's understand. The Pharisees were not just devout religious men who were unbalanced. Unh uh! The Pharisees were not just overly strict keepers of the Law. They were far more than that. The Pharisees perverted God's Law and turned people away from the Truth to look to them in their pride and in their vanity. The Pharisees added and subtracted things that were never ever meant to be. And we have to be careful today that we don't follow in those footsteps. They turned the people away from God and toward themselves. We cannot allow that to happen.

And, yet, there has always been a Pharisaical movement in God's Church—to add to the Law, thereby, in the view of some to be more righteous than others, to take us out of balance into the ditch of self-righteousness and to exalt the self. So, let's beware of the doctrine of the modern day Pharisees.