

## “Compliance”

– Luke 11:37-54

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37 And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. 38 When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. 39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the

outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. 40 "Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? 41 "But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. 42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. 44 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them." 45 Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." 46 And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 "In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 "Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' 50 "that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, 51 "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. 52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." 53 And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, 54 lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.

**Compliance:** *the act of conforming, acquiescing, or yielding. A tendency to yield readily to others, especially in a weak and subservient way. Cooperation or obedience.*

“Compliance.” *Man, even the word makes us bristle! It’s just so...well, un-American isn’t it?*

We might tend to think this “story began” as Jesus arrived at the home of this Pharisee. However, truly this story had already begun quite a distance back, for Jesus had already begun to push the envelope...to ‘separate the sheep from the goats.’ Upon His arrival, Jesus immediately sat down to eat, and He had done so without having exercised the religious practice of washing of His hands. Let us make note herein that this washing was not an issue of cleanliness, but rather of religiosity, social convention, and the good-old-practice-of legalism. So kids, this is not the passage to refer to when mom calls you out on the matter of whether or not you washed your hands before dinner!

Since He “failed to comply,” our Lord’s host was shocked and offended, for this was a serious violation of religious law. It was taught that a person's hands had been in contact with a sinful world so the person was to wash before eating to prevent impurity from entering his body. Like baptism, it was meant to be an outward reflection of an inward act. But it had become a duty rather than a reflection.



This issue of ‘rule-following’ causes each of us to inevitably take a position. Each to ‘fall one direction or the other.’ Some will come forth from the camp of rules and regulations, where their faith is effectively manifested in a snappy religious salute and never coloring outside of the lines. Others will wear their bright red “GRACE” T-shirts nearly every day, and will invariably buck all insinuation of conformity and ultimately *obedience*, claiming spiritual freedom and artistic license. There are the April 15<sup>th</sup> kind of people, and then others are more the April 20<sup>th</sup> (4-20) kind of folks!

Obedience or non-obedience...it’s all such a moot point if the action doesn’t reflect a person inwardly...if it fails to mean something! If it isn’t a true impression of the inward passion and desire, then while such may serve to keep order, it fails to speak of the reality of heart. It fails to tell the truth! You see, Jesus was drawing a deep distinction between external religion and an inward transformation and commitment. He clearly understood man’s tendency to clean up the outside while failing to attend to the inner man. It was an issue *then* as well as *now*.

This methodology screams the ways of the world. It is a practice of secular life and thus so easy to allow to slide into our faith living. The world invariably promotes a form of ‘behavior modification’ ...and external change in performance while inside we remain as we were before, *which is often a personal wreck*. It’s like waxing and polishing a car that won’t run. It may look good, but you still aren’t going anywhere with it!

We have pharmaceuticals that dull the pain but make no change in the *cause* of the pain. We have twelve-step programs, self-help books, diet pills and plastic surgery. We have laws for every facet of life, and speed limits to keep us all reigned in. But the truth is, in my heart I’m squealing tires, banking corners and driving like I stole it. All of man’s rules are geared to make him presentable and palatable to the culture in which he resides. That’s not a bad thing when it comes to a secular society. For anarchy and chaos in the streets is a difficult thing to endure when you are just trying to get to work. No one wants a real life scene from ‘Road Warrior.’ But it does nothing to affect real social change. The inner man remains the same: sinful, lost, and desperate. Welcome to America vintage 2017!

Note too that Jesus was *living out* His lesson. He could preach it from a pulpit somewhere, but He so often chose to model it instead of teaching it verbally. Oh if we more often held to such a ministerial style! What Jesus was differentiating was the path of real, profound, and meaningful Christianity verses that of mere *external* religion. Faith with some depth! Sadly, I cannot say that man has learned much since the lesson Jesus presented that day to the Pharisee. Because truth be told, so many of us are still busy cleaning up the outside man while ignoring the inner man. And all of us can carry on in ‘external mode’ for a time...hoping that people...*maybe even ourselves*, will believe we are something that we are not. But we finally succumb to the inevitable truth and we generally move on at that point. We fail to understand that Jesus clearly taught a principle that a man changes from the inside out.

The self-righteous religionist is the first to reject this position. They operate under the umbrella of discipline and merit...that we ‘get what we deserve’ and that life goes well for ‘good boys and girls.’ Accept it doesn’t. But for them to think otherwise makes their heads explode because rejection of their position would mean that there is really is no solid ground under our feet and no control over our destinies and our future. They want to hold onto the premise of “what you see is what you get.” But one needs not live along time in this world to know that there are few illusions in life that are greater than that one!

The external Christian is one who, according to Christ, attempts to create his or her own way into the kingdom of God. An individual that believes he can make it to heaven on his own works and outward acts of self-righteousness, and sadly, will also be rejected by the failure of that same criteria. Jesus had already tried to warn of this lie of Satan. He repeatedly tried to wave people off as they tried to land on this paper-mache runway. John 10:1 "*I assure*

*you, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber!”*

In verse 40, Jesus has a name for those who would attempt to stand righteous before God on their own rule-following merits: “fools.” To ignore God’s loving grace in the act of His Son Jesus, and instead attempt to “go it alone” is, in our Lord’s own words, *stupid*. **Fool (Gr):** “without reason, senseless, foolish, *stupid*.”

Christ was and *is* seeking an outward expression of faith, but one that is a reflection of a loving heart. This is what He wants from all of us. Both action *and* a heart of love. One or the other alone just doesn’t do it. Having a passion for something or someone will inevitably result in movement motivated by that passion. To say you have love and yet fail to act according to that love is a lie and one that everyone can see except maybe ourselves! 1 John 3:18-19 ***“Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.”***

But on the other hand, to follow all the rules and always physically do the right external action without that love is legalism and again...as Jesus said, *foolishness*. Furthermore, it is in fact, *a lie*. Paul spoke also of the same saying “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.” (1 Corinthians 12:9-11)

The great pastor and writer Harry Ironside once said: “When the love of God fills the heart so that one will be concerned about the needs of others, then only will these outward observances have any real value. He who is constantly gathering up for himself, in utter indifference to the poor and needy about him, gives evidence that the love of God does not dwell in him.”

As usual, Jesus was quite willing to break with social protocol. The severe things said in verses 39–52 against Pharisees and lawyers were said at a Pharisee’s dinner table (verse 37). What we call “good taste” is often made a substitute for loyalty to truth; we smile when we should frown; and we are silent when we should speak. Better break up a dinner party than break faith with God.

Jesus knew from where this attitude was coming from. He outed these men for the pride that so often comes with position. He said in Luke 6:45 that “*What you say flows from what is in your heart.*” And there is no separation of the two issues! For we *do* what we *are*. This truth is manifested in so many churches. When a person loses that “best seat” or that place of position, he departs in a tantrum and anger.

Jesus went on to compare them to unmarked graves. The Law of Moses dictated that whoever touched a grave was unclean for seven days (Num. 19:16) even if he didn’t know at the time that it was a grave. His insinuation was that the Pharisees were like those graves. They were like unmarked graves, full of corruption and uncleanness, and infecting others with their externalism and pride.

Now in verse 45, the lawyers, the *scribes*, enter the fray. These were the so-called experts at interpreting and explaining the law, but they were really experts at loading people down with rules and regulations that generally could not be followed with any real consistency and **they** for sure didn’t follow them themselves! They were notorious for adding to the plain meaning of scripture, corrupting the real truth in it. They were not in any way shepherds or caretakers of the flock. Rather, they used their position to attain power and position.

These scribes went to great lengths to appear very righteous and holy. They built monuments and great tombs for the giants of the faith that had come before them but conveniently hid the fact that it was the likes of them who actually killed those prophets. In truth, they would be the ones who would persecute and put to death the greatest of the prophets, even Christ Himself, as well as all the prophets that would follow. Their religion never made it past a pious, self-righteous lifestyle. They knew nothing about love and commitment. Nothing about change of heart and passions. They were Sunday church goers at best.

Sadly, this is still a reality in the greater church today. It is often those within the walls of religion who are Christ's worst enemies. They often have beautiful buildings that cost a fortune, but give no consideration to the lost and dying world or the needs and lives of people who live everyday out in it. They even go further by attacking those who are truly battling the enemy and reaching out to the street. They promote false doctrines, unscriptural practices and feed the emotions and seek after money. Their goal is 'bodies in the pews' and they get them. And there the people will sit until death, judgement, and eternal damnation.

Instead of bringing the people nearer to God, these guys had, in reality, kept the people from a true relationship with a loving God. They kept people ignorant of the words of God and laid so many requirements, *false requirements*, upon the people that they never attained standing with their Creator. They were actually trying to keep the people from coming to Jesus and finding true salvation. Why? Because they didn't want to lose the power they held over the people and the clout that went along with it.

Certainly this dinner was over before it started; truly a party gone bad. Instead of being corrected and repenting, those present attacked Christ, making His prophetic words a reality even before He got out of the room. He offered them the truth, and what He received in return was hostility. But Jesus never claimed that His road was as easy one. He never gave Christianity a rosy spin so that it would be more palatable. He never compromised.

The fact is, it is just a whole lot easier to order up a set of rules and *comply*, then act out of an inward heart that is changed by the Spirit of God. Sadly, such gains us nothing in the eyes of Christ. John 15 speaks so vividly about the way things are meant to be in the kingdom realm. He tells us therein that He is the vine and we are the branch. He tells us most definitely that the branch that does not *do*...that does not produce, is worth nothing and is 'removed'...gathered up and burned.

But He goes on to say that we are *already* clean through the words that He has spoken to us. (John 15:3) That we do not need to do or earn our standing with Him. It's been done already *by* Him. Ours now is to ***abide in Him***. No problem for those of us that are in love with Him and desire first and foremost to be near Him and near where He is present and active! Our desire is therefore to be like our Dad. And connected to Him we produce!

That passage in John then calls upon us to love each other as Christ has loved us. But no one can make love happen. It cannot be contrived or forced. Such love comes from a knowledge and understanding of Him and what He has done. It's called the gospel. And it is the only thing that will save us. And there is one thing about love that changes everything...real love has no limits, it withholds nothing, it compromises nothing. Jesus *died* for His love for us.

**What does the love that we claim to have for Him do in our lives?**