

Beware of Hypocrisy

**"Sell that ye have, and give alms. Provide yourselves bags
which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens
that faileth not—Luke 12:33**

LUKE CHAPTER TWELVE

THIS is an important chapter. It is an important part of the brief but infinitely deep teachings of the Greatest Teacher who ever lived—the Teacher who was a perfect Example of his own teaching.

The lessons he taught constitute the Way of Life. There are many teachers, many schools, many courses of instruction in this world, but this one stands out from them all, like light from darkness.

According as we pass or fail THIS course—according as we learn or do not learn it—so our eternal destiny is determined. Surely then there is nothing in the world that approaches the importance of the earnest, eager, continuous prayerful study of these things!

Let us not take Salvation for granted. So many appear to, by the unconcerned way they give energy and attention to so many unimportant and passing things.

Salvation is well within the grasp of all, but it is only promised to those who devote ALL their heart, and bend ALL their energies, to obtaining it.

Remember the Pearl of Great Price. He "sold all that he had" to get it. Think of that continually—many times a day—

He sold ALL THAT HE HAD to obtain it.

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THIS chapter deals with the basic realities of Truth, of character, of conduct. It has to do with our daily lives—all the simple but basic day-to-day activities that form the pattern of our existence.

It manifests the mind and wisdom of the Spirit. It is essential for our salvation that we learn the lessons that God seeks to teach us through this Perfect Teacher that His love provided.

These are the truths that shall "make us free"—free from the mind of the flesh, the natural mind, the natural, animal way of death, the "corruption that is in the world through lust."

It is revolutionary. It is transforming. It is fresh, and new, and different. It is not just repairs and patches and alterations on an old familiar garment. We must be prepared for a complete change of thinking from the natural way of sinful, fleshly man.

We MUST come to the words of Christ as to a Great Light, in the full assurance of faith—realizing our own darkness and ignorance and need for complete transformation from natural to spiritual—praying that we may be blessed to understand, and comprehend, and absorb into our minds and lives these wonderful teachings of the Spirit of God.

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"There were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another"—v. 1.

The leaders he denounced in terrible, scathing words, directly dictated by the Holy Spirit to which he was always completely subject. His words were the words of God.

But the people he looked upon with sorrow and compassion, as "sheep without a shepherd." They flocked to hear him, seeking help, light, guidance, comfort, and answers to the dark enigma of life, escape from the burden and sorrow and plodding meaninglessness of natural existence.

But very few comprehended. All except a handful turned away. They could not face the dazzling, searching glory of these words of eternal life. They were too deep, too vast, too revolutionary, too upsetting.

They meant too much of a change in the familiar, comfortable, deep-rooted patterns of flesh. His hearers sensed that he was asking them to break loose from all the fixed and stable and respectable principles the wisdom of the flesh is built on, and plunge with him in faith into the uncharted and the unknown.

He spoke words that could only be spiritually received and understood, words that could be understood only by those who—above all else—WANTED to draw nigh to God in love and worship and service and eternal, thankful joy.

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"He began to say unto his disciples first of all..."

If "First of all" is made the beginning of his statement, as some translations show it, it would be clearer—

"He began to say unto his disciples, First of all..."

But either way still gives strong emphasis to his warning:

"Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

He does not mean beware of hypocrisy in others: he means beware of it in YOURSELF. This is clear from what he says further, in vs. 2-3.

First of all, ABOVE all, "Beware of hypocrisy." Because of the deceptiveness of the mind of the flesh, this is our greatest danger and stumbling block. This is the biggest hazard to our attainment of the Kingdom.

The original word for "hypocrisy" literally means "acting a part on the stage." It means creating an appearance of being different from what we really are, or—and this is even more subtle and dangerous—thinking ourselves, our conduct, our motives, our characters, to be different from what they are.

Acting instead of really BEING is the great problem with us all. And we get so adept at acting a transformation, we think we're really transformed.

Naturally, by birth of sinful flesh, we are all hypocrites. The natural mind of the flesh is wholly hypocritical and false:

"In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth NO GOOD THING" (Rom. 7:18).

Only the light of the Spirit-Word, diligently studied and sincerely applied, can enable us to discern this natural, inbred hypocrisy of the flesh.

The diabolos is the great deceiver. The Spirit-Word is the great enlightener.

One of the 6 occurrences of this word "hypocrisy" is applied to Peter when he would not eat with the Gentiles (Gal. 2:13), there rendered "dissimulation."

Peter was sincere, but he was deceived by the flesh. He did not see himself clearly. Let us constantly, searchingly, examine ourselves, our actions, our motives: WHY do we really do, say and think what we do?

God hates anything false and artificial—all hollow show and appearance and pretense. All such is out of harmony with truth, reality and eternity.

SO much attention is paid to external appearance! SO much pitiful effort to deck and camouflage and glorify and glamorize a poor, corrupt, perishing body.

And so little concern or effort is shown for INNER reality and purification and transformation. "Beware of hypocrisy"—playacting, putting on a show, making clean and beautiful the outside, neglecting the inside that God alone can see.

Any form of religion that does not go right down to the deepest roots of the heart and completely change and transform the whole life is HYPOCRISY—Pharisaism, counterfeit—powerless to save from death.

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"For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; And that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops"—vs. 2-3.

The ACTING will be ruthlessly sifted from the true BEING. This is not a threat. It is a plain, simple statement of fact. And wisdom will be thankful, and guided by it.

God, we are told, is a "God of Truth," and let us be eternally glad it is so. We cannot fight against God. We cannot fight against facts. God's Will—His glorious, perfect, all-righteous Will—will prevail at last. Everything out of harmony with it must disappear forever from the face of the earth.

Everything that is in any way false will be exposed to shame, and cleared away. Everything that is hidden will be brought out into the light, in the process of cleansing the earth for the habitation of God's glory.

When all external appearance is taken away, what shall we have of eternal reality, as we stand exposed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, before the eyes of all the ages? How much of all our life's effort and interest and accomplishment will pass through the fire, to stand to our account?

We read of Achan's childish attempt to hide something from God by burying it in his tent, and how the whole affair was openly exposed before the whole congregation, and he was destroyed.

We see the same pitiful pantomime being acted out again at the beginning of another dispensation, in the scheming folly of Ananias and Sapphira.

We wonder, in the superiority of our enlightenment, how people can be so stupid as to try to deceive God in such obvious, clumsy ways. But—"Beware of hypocrisy": if we will examine ourselves, we will find Achan and Ananias right within our own hearts.

We shall find the same stupidity of the flesh that thinks it can please itself and gratify itself and cut corners in God's service and still out-manuever God into giving us eternal life.

Ananias and Sapphira "kept back part of the price." They doubtless gave most of it, and felt noble in so doing, but the lesson is that "most" is not enough. God demands ALL—not as an "austere man," but as our joyful and "reasonable service." Less than all means the heart is not right, the value of the Pearl is not comprehended, and sacrifice is blemished and incomplete.

Are we exactly what we appear to be?

Are we, to the best of our ability, and to the full extent of our opportunity, ALL that implied in God's commands and our solemn covenant that—

"ALL that the Lord hath spoken we will do"?

To the extent that we are not, to that extent we are hypocrites—play-actors—holding back part of the price.

"There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known."

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"Fear not man who can, at worst, only cut off your mortal life; but fear God who can end your life eternally"—vs. 4-5.

We all fear man. Man's opinion, man's favor, man's friendship, man's approval, man's help, man's ridicule, man's threats and powers of damage and harm—if we examine our lives, we shall find that these things loom large in all our calculations and provisions.

But what is man compared to God? What can man do beyond what God permits? The words of Jesus indicate the only way of wisdom—

"Frame your life and all your actions solely with a view to GOD's opinion, and approval, and favor."

But this is hard. It is contrary to nature. It takes constant self-reminding and effort, and a deep, powerful, living Faith, to do everything we do solely as unto God with no deviation or hesitation out of fear of man or consequences.

But this path alone gives peace: this path alone gives life.

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"Are not five sparrows sold for a farthing?—and not one of them is forgotten before God."

This is a tremendous conception. We cannot comprehend God but it is essential to our salvation that we continually meditate upon His infinite greatness and marvelousness.

Nothing is too vast for His perfect control; nothing is too small for His observance and attention! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowing it. He is everywhere present, and universally aware of every minute detail of His vast and glorious creation.

All things are created by and out of His Spirit. All manifestations of creation are concretions of His Power, and atomic research has begun to reveal in this our generation the infinite power locked up in a single handful of dust. And beyond power there is—even in the sparrow—the unfathomable marvel and miracle of Life from God.

We must continually strive to get the fullness of this vast conception of God.

He is not a God afar off. He is not a God too busy or too occupied to take constant complete care of the least of His children. Any conception of God that is less than this does not have the full power of the Truth—either for comfort or for stirring up to the terrible responsibilities of holiness.

"Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered"—v. 7.

Nothing is missed. Nothing is overlooked. Every giving in to the motions of the flesh, and every effort to overcome—no matter how small or insignificant—all are observed by a strict though loving Father.

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"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God"—v. 8.

To what extent do we make an effort to fulfill this requirement of discipleship in our daily life? The natural way is to delude ourselves with one of many lazy excuses—

"It wouldn't do any good...I have tried it before...It only makes bad feeling...People will think that I am queer...We shouldn't 'Cast pearls before swine,' etc."

This last one especially—so much unfaithful stewardship hides behind the misapplication of this quotation! But the words of Jesus still stand to judge us at the last day: "Only those who make a point of confessing me publicly will I confess."

And this matter of "confessing Christ" is not just talking about the Truth. Actually that is just a very small part of the full picture. The main aspect is LIVING the Truth in an open, light-irradiating, consistent, self-controlled, beneficent godliness, graciousness and gentleness.

It should always be obvious in a courteous and kindly way, that we are a separate, holy people, that we are not part of the common, coarse animal run of the world, that we have "been with Jesus."

"Let your light shine"—noiselessly but unmistakably—"that men may see your good works and glorify your Father." The connection and motive must be clear and obvious enough so that God is glorified—not us.

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In vs. 13-15 a man in the crowd, wholly absorbed in his own petty little selfishness and completely oblivious to the vast scope of Jesus' words of eternal life, broke in to demand—

"Master, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me!"

What an ugly, grating and incongruous contrast to the depth and beauty of Christ's words! But when we think upon it, do we not all fit into this picture?—so much more concerned with and wrapped up in our own petty little interests than in the great scope of God's purpose.

We see the world going its animal way—to the bar, to the racetrack, to the theater, to the television—and we tend, like the Pharisee, to congratulate ourselves that we are "not as other men are." But we can so easily be going the same self-pleasing way on a different plane.

The question is: Are we, in our lives, primarily seeking to serve and please God, or ourselves? If the latter, then no matter how elevated and noble the activity, it is still the flesh.

Jesus' words are timeless and boundless in their gentle but clear warning—

"Take heed! Beware! Beware of covetousness—the animal desire for material things—for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"—v. 15.

A man's riches are what he IS, not what he HAS.

Out of this incident comes the parable of the rich fool, who planned everything so beautifully for a comfortable, plentiful old age—the normal pursuit of animal man today.

Jesus did not condemn him. He didn't say he was wicked to make such wise and practical provision for the necessities of the future. He just said—

"You poor fool! You poor, pitiful, blind fool! Today your life is done. All your opportunities of gaining real, eternal riches are passed forever. It's all over for you. NOW what good is all your carefully hoarded wealth?"

And so, says Jesus, is everyone who gathers for himself, rather than for God.

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The next 10 verses put this lesson into direct, plain instruction, repeated for emphasis—

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on"—v. 22.

Consider the ravens: God feeds them. Consider the lilies: God clothes them with greater beauty and splendor than Solomon in all his glory. All these things do the animal nations of the world seek after. This is their wisdom, their way of life. This is all they know. They know nothing of spiritual values, spiritual riches, spiritual insurance for every conceivable eventuality of the present and the future. So they labor to load themselves with possessions and safeguards, driven by greed, and obsessed with fear.

But YE are called to something infinitely greater and more noble and more satisfying—even God's glorious eternal Kingdom.

Jesus is not teaching laziness or improvidence. We are clearly taught elsewhere to "provide for our own," and "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

What IS he teaching? He is teaching first of all that we MUST NOT WORRY. This is a positive command. All worry is a lack of faith, a doubting of God, a triumph of fear over love. Having done our best, we MUST trust in God's care—

"If God so clothe the grass, how much more will He clothe you, O ye of LITTLE FAITH!"—v. 28.

Is that us: "little faith"? Worried about this, worried about that; fearful and concerned about life's passing problems which loom so large and so important to them of little faith?

And he is teaching that we must get the right perspective. We must learn and recognize and accept the relative importance and unimportance of things. Truly we must eat, we must be clothed, we must have somewhere to live, but these are very passing, secondary things, the more simply taken care of and gotten out of the way the better, so the mind and time and energy can be given to REAL things.

Small minds are absorbed with food and raiment and all the passing things of this life. Spiritual minds dwell on the things of God—wonderful, glorious, eternal things.

Which are we?—small, childish, immature, concerned with and interested in the things of the present? Or are we truly endeavoring to GROW UP—and set our affections on things above, to grow in mental and spiritual stature, in knowledge and in divine grace?

We all start out small and childish. It's no sin to be small-minded. But it IS a sin, and a tragedy, to stay small-minded, to be satisfied with small-mindedness, to be absorbed and satisfied with earthly things—to want to just hoard marbles and play house.

It is said that very, very few people ever grow mentally beyond the age of 12 to 15. They get more knowledge and experience, of course, but they never get any more mature. Their type and depth of thinking as it is then stays with them all their life.

The great beauty of the way of God is that it develops the understanding of everything. It opens and enlarges the heart and the mind—

"Evil men understand not judgment, but they that seek the Lord understand ALL things" (Prov. 28:5).

"The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, but he that is spiritual discerneth all things... We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:14-16).

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"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to GIVE you the Kingdom"—v. 32.

God does not measure and calculate in His blessings. His ways are vast and limitless. Upon those who, in submission to these words of life, truly seek to conform to the required pattern of godliness—upon such He has promised to pour out a limitless abundance of blessings forever without measure or end.

"Sell that ye have, and give alms. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not"—v. 33.

What wonderful words! What searching words! What revolutionary words! But how do WE stand as regards

getting our whole pattern of life into harmony with the glorious, overflowing spirit of these things? Beautiful thoughts—but how about the practical application? How often God's words to Ezekiel come to mind (Eze. 33:32)—

"Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Most of us have been in the Truth quite a while—plenty long enough to be showing some results of the power of these teachings, if we are ever going to. How do we stand? Is our life in tune with them? And if not, WHY not? Do we foolishly expect the prize without conforming to the rules?

Are we givers or getters? Are we scatterers or hoarders? Says the Spirit through Paul—

"God loveth a CHEERFUL giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

That is, one who gives in the enlightened joy of reaching up toward the greatness of the mind of God, the Great Giver of all. Jesus said, in his one direct statement that is not recorded in the Gospels—

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"Blessed" means happy. It is more happiness, more fun, more sheer joy of living, to give than receive.

We tend to concentrate our attention, like the rest of the world, on the little childish, self-centered joy of receiving. But we are cheating ourselves out of the far greater and fuller joy of giving. Jesus said (Lk. 6:38):

"Give, and it shall be given unto you—good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. For with the same measure that ye measure, it shall be measured to you again."

So the degree of our joy and fullness of life is entirely up to us. It's up to us whether we choose to live big or small—according to the glorious greatness of the Spirit, or to the cramped smallness of the flesh.

There's a very beautiful proverb that says (11:24)—

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth. And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

Cramped, calculating selfishness tendeth to poverty—shriveled poverty of heart, soul and mind. Parsimoniousness is not prudence: it is unfaithful stewardship and embezzlement of God's entrusted goods.

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"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—v. 34.

If we have treasure—goods, possessions, interests—on earth, our heart will inevitably be there with them. Jesus says so. It is an inexorable law of our nature. Therefore the URGENT exhortation is—

"Sell that ye have, and give alms."

Get rid of it, before it pulls you down to perdition. Get all your treasure transferred to the Bank of Heaven as fast as you can, where it will be safe, and where it will pull you UP instead of down—where it will still be to your eternal account when all human banks and insurance companies are liquidated in the great earthquake soon to come upon the earth.

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Let us close with the thought of vs. 35-36—

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord."

"Your loins girded"—the symbol of preparedness, readiness to move, to act, to respond instantly to a call. Active and awake, all affairs in order—not cumbered, cluttered and confused with present things.

Bro. Thomas said, 100 years ago, that the return of the Jew to Israel and the rise of the Northern Colossus to world power and with covetous eye on the Mideast, would be signs of the end that even the blindest could not fail to see.

We have seen both fulfilled to a degree that even bro. Thomas himself never dreamed of. Let us be ready momentarily, for he is even at the door.

"And your lights burning."

ARE they?

"Let your light shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father."

Is our life a shining spiritual light, so that men may look upon us and glorify God? It **MUST** be that way, if we are to achieve salvation. These words of Jesus are the "words of eternal life." His words describe and define the only possible way of eternal life, and they must be fulfilled in us if we are to be the children of God—

"Blessed are those servants—and they **ALONE** are blessed—whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching"—v. 37.

Bro. G.V. Growcott