

Teaching about Hypocrisy and the Courage to Testify

Luke 12:1-12

Luke 12:1-12: In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. 4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! 6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 8 "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. 9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10 "And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. 11 "Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. 12 For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Background Notes

Verse 1 says that the multitude was growing in size. The word had spread that the Lord had denounced the scribes and Pharisees - in no uncertain terms - with scathing rebukes! The common people would have loved it, just as we are properly glad when self-righteous hypocrites are properly denounced. So the crowd was growing to the point where they literally were stepping on one another.

The Lord used this opportunity to teach His disciples. Thus His remarks at the beginning of the chapter were specifically addressed to His disciples, but by the end of the chapter He was speaking to the whole multitude (v54). So here in the first part of the chapter, although the Lord was specifically addressing His remarks to His inner circle of disciples, many in the crowd would have heard Him speaking. And remember, many in this mixed crowd were followers of the Lord to one degree or another.

Doctrinal Points

1. Don't be a hypocrite, because everything will be revealed.

The Lord warned His disciples to be aware of “the leaven of the Pharisees” – hypocrisy! As leaven, or yeast, expands and affects the whole batch, so hypocrisy expands and spreads, and it affects everyone it touches. The Lord warned His disciples not to be taken in by the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (He had strongly denounced that in chapter 11). In essence He was saying, “Watch out! Don't become hypocrites yourselves, because in the end everything will be revealed! All the masks will come off. All hidden motives and hidden agendas will be exposed.” *“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.”* This warning is just as true today as it was when the Lord gave it to His disciples. Don't be a hypocrite - because everything will be revealed!

2. Don't be afraid, because everything will be provided.

Verse 3: *“Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”*

Does verse 3 belong with verse 2, referring to the bad hidden things of the hypocrites? Or does it belong with “the good things of the gospel” that would be courageously proclaimed by persecuted believers (v4-5)? In view of the parallel passage in Matthew 10, it seems that in verse 3 he Lord has transitioned from remarks about hypocrisy to encouragement for the disciples to be courageous in their proclamation of the gospel.

Matthew 10:27-31: *“Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

Sparrows were so inexpensive that if you bought four for 2 cents, a fifth one was thrown in for nothing - and yet God knew about every one of those insignificant little sparrows! So how much more does God know and care about His followers, both then and today? And if the very hairs of our head are numbered, just imagine how much the Lord knows and cares about us! So don't be afraid. Everything will be provided.

The Lord will meet our physical needs, but these verses also strongly indicate that the Lord will supply the moral strength and courage that we need in times of crisis, including possible martyrdom and death. Verse 4: *“My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”* The Lord was saying that death is as far as the opposition can chase you – and after that you're “Home free”! The implication of verse 5 is that the opposition will be cast into hell. Verses 11-12 teach us that even the specific words we should say in times of crisis will be provided to

us, if we look to the Lord: *“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”* Don’t be afraid, because everything will be provided.

3. Don’t be a coward, because everything will be reviewed.

Verses 8-9 certainly apply to both salvation and discipleship: *“Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”* To confess Christ as Lord is to be saved and become a true Christian. Romans 10:9-10 says, *“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* That confession of faith will be honored in eternity. But in the Day of Judgment, God will deny those who deny Christ, as the Pharisees were doing. The Pharisees who had committed the unpardonable sin of attributing the Lord’s miracles to Satan will be in hell forever.

These verses certainly can be applied in the area of discipleship. In our lives as disciples, we can boldly confess the Lord in our testimony - or we can deny the Lord by both our words and our actions. When we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, our lives as disciples will be reviewed. The following verses are written to believers. Romans 14:10: *“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...”* and 2 Corinthians 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

In application of these verses to discipleship, I’m reading an excellent note from the [Life Application Bible](#): *“We disown Jesus when we (1) hope no one will think we are Christians, (2) decide not to speak up for what is right, (3) are silent about our relationship with God, (4) blend into society, and (5) accept our culture’s non-Christian values. By contrast, we acknowledge Him when we (1) live moral, upright Christ-honoring lives, (2) look for opportunities to share our faith with others, (3) help others in need, (4) take a stand for justice, (5) love others, (6) acknowledge our loyalty to Christ, and (7) use our lives and resources to carry out His desires rather than our own.”*

Don’t be a coward, because everything will be reviewed.

Practical Application

Don’t use Luke 12:11-12 as your excuse for not being prepared.

Verses 11-12: *“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to*

say.” Some Christians have wrongly used these verses as an excuse (or worse yet, as a command!) for failing to prepare for Bible studies, or sermons, or ministry opportunities. Believe it or not, these verses have actually been used as an excuse for negligence – and that is “**bad** hermeneutics” (improper biblical interpretation)!

The context here shows that these words are an encouragement to the disciples when they face persecutions for their Christian faith. They are promised that when they are in crisis situations and confronted by hostile authorities, the Holy Spirit will give them the words that they should say.

Believers today can certainly claim this promise. The Lord will give us the words to say in times of crisis. But when it is not a crisis time, and we have time for studying and preparation, let’s not be lazy and try to justify our selfishness by using this scripture as an excuse for our laziness and negligence. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, *“Study, or be diligent, to present yourself approved to God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

Don’t use Luke 12:11 as your excuse for not being prepared!