

Luke 11:37-54

Introduction: Following His teaching on light, Luke now records what spiritual darkness looks like. And he exposes the darkness in the most unexpected place.

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for lacking Godward purity—11:37-41

- 1) Jesus deliberately provokes a confrontation—11:37-38 ³⁷ *Now when Jesus spoke, a certain Pharisee was asking Him to eat a meal* (similar to brunch, after morning prayers) *with him. So He entered and reclined at table.* ³⁸ *And when the Pharisee perceived it, he was surprised that He had not first had Himself washed [βαπτίζω] before the meal.*
 - a) The man never speaks out loud. Jesus knows his thoughts!
 - b) Having one's hands washed was not commanded in the Old Testament, though they claimed to base it on Leviticus 11:33 and 15:12. It was a cultural practice that attempted to keep oneself from becoming contaminated by something considered unclean. Oh the irony of potentially being contaminated in a Pharisee's house!
- 2) Jesus authoritatively challenges His host—11:39-41 ³⁹ *But the Lord said to him,*
 - a) “Now **you^{pl}** (emphatic) *Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you^{pl} are full of greediness and wickedness.*
 - b) ⁴⁰ *You^{pl} foolish ones [ἄφρων]*! (cf. Proverbs 1:22; 10:18, 21; 12:1, 15; et al)
 - i) Rhetorical question—*Did not the One who made the outside make the inside also?*
 - (1) God is concerned with what is both inside and outside.
 - ii) Command—⁴¹ *But give as charity those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you^{pl}.*
 - (1) Genuine charity should spring from a heart that loves God and people and is genuinely moved at the misery of others.
- 3) The Pharisees are just as guilty before God as the rest of the evil generation.

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for lacking a Godward focus—11:42-44

- 1) Pharisees neglect important spiritual matters—11:42 ⁴² *But woe (# 1) to you^{pl} Pharisees!* (i.e. “How sad it is for you^{pl} that you^{pl} ...”)
 - a) *For you^{pl} give a tenth of mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and love for God* (cf. Micah 6:8); *but these are the things* (i.e. justice and love) *you^{pl} ought to have done without neglecting the others.*
 - b) Remember Luke's current theme of love for God and love for one's neighbor. Don't be selective in your obedience to God's commands.
- 2) Pharisees are self-focused—11:43 ⁴³ *Woe (# 2) to you^{pl} Pharisees!*
 - a) *For you^{pl} love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces.*
- 3) Pharisees endanger others spiritually—11:44 ⁴⁴ *Woe (# 3) to you^{pl}, scholars [γραμματεύς] and Pharisees, hypocrites!*
 - a) *For you^{pl} are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.”*

- i) You are containers of death, defiling all who come in contact with you. (cf. Numbers 19:11-22; Leviticus 21:1-3)

Jesus rebukes the scribes/law experts for lacking a Godward focus—11:45-52

- 1) ⁴⁵ *Then one of the law experts [νομικός], having responded, said to Him, “Teacher, when You say these things You are insulting us also.”*
- a) To his credit he understands what Jesus is saying, but sadly he is still assuming his own righteousness before God.
 - b) The law experts interpreted the law and assisted the Pharisees in their study of tradition. They were closely aligned.
- 2) ⁴⁶ *And He said,*
- a) They are callously self-focused—11:46 “*Woe to you^{pl} also, law experts [νομικός]!*
 - i) *For you^{pl} burden the people with difficult burdens, and you^{pl} yourselves (emphatic) do not even touch the burdens with one of your^{pl} fingers.*
 - ii) They make no effort to help others; thus they demonstrate they are without mercy to those in misery. How ungodly this is! - b) They reject God’s revelation—11:47-51 ⁴⁷ *Woe to you^{pl}!*
 - i) *For you^{pl} build the memorials of the prophets, and your^{pl} fathers killed them.*
 - (1) ⁴⁸ *So you^{pl} are bearing witness and approving the deeds of your^{pl} fathers; for they (emphatic) indeed killed them, and you^{pl} (emphatic) are building their memorials.*
 - (2) ⁴⁹ *Therefore the wisdom of God also said,*
 - (a) *What? I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’*
 - (b) *Why? ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets that was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel (cf. Genesis 4:10) to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the temple (cf. 2nd Chronicles 24:20-25).*

- ii) **You^{p/l}** (emphatic) did not enter in yourselves, and you^{p/l} hindered those who were entering.

Opposition from religious leaders begins to solidify and intensify—11:53-54

- 1) Who? ⁵³ Now when He said these things to them, the scholars [γραμματές] and the Pharisees began ...
- 2) What?
 - a) to be very hostile [pres. act. inf. ἐνέχω] (i.e. hold a terrible grudge; calculated hostility in retaliation)
 - b) and to question [pres. act. inf. ἀποστοματίζω] Him concerning many things,
 - c) I.e. “You made us look bad publicly; we’ll make You look bad.”
- 3) When? This has a hunting/ambush theme
 - a) ⁵⁴ while conspiring against [pres. act. ptc. ἐνεδρεύω] Him,
 - b) seeking [pres. act. ptc. ζητέω] to catch [aor. act. inf. θηρεύω] Him in something He might say,
 - c) There will be no reconciliation between Jesus and Pharisees and scribes.
- 4) Why?
 - a) so that they might accuse/bring legal charges against [aor. act. subj. κατηγορέω] Him.
- 5) Hostility to God’s way is often the product of rejecting His revelation.
- 6) Jesus has turned the entire system on its head. Everything presupposed about how to come to God has been challenged and contradicted. The leadership is furious. (Couch)

Take-home truth: Sometimes a lifestyle of piety is a lifestyle of death, particularly when it is self-absorbed.