

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Do you remember the last time that you got into trouble? When was the last time that you wanted to do something and your parents said no? And when you asked them why, they emphatically said, "Because I said so!" Oh, didn't you really dislike that answer? The reason that we didn't like that response wasn't necessarily because they didn't have a good answer, but more so because they were using the power of authority over us. And even when we finally graduate high school or college and get out of the house, authority is still all around us. We have to follow our local authority of government, bosses, and teachers. Then above that is our federal government, including Governors, state officials, and law enforcement. And finally, we have to obey our national government with the President, Senators, Congressmen, Supreme Court justices, and many more. Authority is all around us and we can never get out from under it.

One authority that is always a constant in the life of every Christian is the authority of Jesus Christ in our lives. Jesus should be the supreme authority concerning all the decisions in our lives. While Jesus is the highest authority we will ever encounter, He does not want us to follow Him because we are scared of the consequences for not following. He continued to get angry with the Pharisees and other individuals of authority as they abused their position of authority. These Pharisees would take advantage of the common people and use their badges of authority to rob the people of their money. He did not want people to abuse the authority that they had been given and take advantage of less fortunate individuals.

WOE TO THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees during the time of Jesus' life were of a sect of Israel who followed the law and also their own traditions to a tee. They would refuse to go against the law for any purpose whatsoever. Jesus reacted against their abuses and mistreatment of the poor and common individuals. These people were so concerned about following the law that they refused to love and support individuals in need. All throughout verses 39 - 44, Jesus criticized the motives and lives of the Pharisees. He talked about how the Pharisees continued to show on the outside the life of a true believer and yet on the inside were dirty. He wanted them to realize the hypocritical state that their lives were in. Jesus explained to them that if they would give from the charity within, they would clean the outside of themselves as well. How many times do we put on the front of religion, yet deep inside we are filthy and dirty? The Pharisees were so specific on giving a tenth of everything that they had, even a tenth of herbs they grew in their garden, but they neglected to care for the individuals around them. These Pharisees wanted to be seen as religious as they set in the first seats of the synagogues, but really their hearts were far from Him. They were as unmarked graves, a term that referred to someone walking near an "unmarked" grave and becoming unclean without even knowing it. The Pharisees were full of

“uncleanness” in their lives and people were becoming corrupt by being near them, without even knowing it.

WOE TO THE LAW EXPERTS

After Jesus had finished saying all these things concerning the Pharisees, one of the law experts decided to join the conversation as well. Evidently, when Jesus was explaining all of these negative things about the Pharisees, it was also hitting home to the law expert. He told Jesus that when He said those negative things about the Pharisees, He was insulting them, too. This was Jesus’ chance to tell the law experts where their lives were also wrong. These law experts were loading the poor, common people with burdens that they could not possibly carry. What was worse was that once they loaded individuals down with burdens, they would not go out of their way to help them with their problems. These law experts were also closed-minded, as they would not accept the ideas of the prophets. Their fathers were the ones who had killed the prophets before them and these experts would not accept the Prophet that was walking among them at that time. These law experts had also taken away the opportunity for everyday people to gain knowledge. They realized that knowledge is power, and thus, they wanted the powerless to remain that way. Instead of teaching the Scriptures, they added their traditions and rules to them and kept individuals from learning the truth. Today, we must take every advantage that is available to us to learn more about the truth and the knowledge that is open to us.

Once Jesus had finished talking to the Pharisees and law experts, they began to plot how they would trap Him. They opposed everything that He had said and began to cross-examine all that He would say. They were waiting for a chance to trap Him and accuse Him.

Amy Carrico