

In **Luke 15:2**, the Pharisees are grumbling because Jesus is hanging out with tax collectors/sinners, but now they take the next step: openly ridiculing Him. **V. 14** Why are they ridiculing Him? Because Jesus had just taught that we are to invest our money into eternal purposes and that we can't serve both God and money. This stepped on the Pharisees' toes, because they were *lovers of money*. They were covetous/wanted to get rich. They were motivated by greed, like the false teachers Peter spoke of: (2 Pet 2:14) *They have hearts trained in greed*. Like many professing Christians today, they professed devotion to God, but were really devoted to that which the ungodly world is devoted: the pursuit of riches. So when Jesus said no one can serve both God and money, they were indicted, because they tried to serve both. Instead of being humble/obedient to God's teaching, they were prideful and "turned their noses up" (literal translation) at Him, ridiculed Him, scoffed at Him: an expression of great reproach, disdain, scorn.

Isn't this a great temptation when someone challenges us with God's truth about our pet sin, our *darling lust* as Matthew Henry calls it? Attack the sin I love or struggle with and I'll fight you or laugh it off like it's no big deal to alleviate the tension of being confronted. Or I'll scoff at the messenger (or worse, God's Word itself) to distract from submitting to His Word in areas where deep-seated, sinful actions and attitudes live in my life. *We have a tendency to laugh off and attack that which is for our good, salvation/sanctification*. In so doing, we

reproach/disdain God's Word. *We must respond in humble obedience, not prideful disregard*.

Believer, they ridiculed Jesus, but He didn't walk away in shame. Their scoffing deterred Him none. He plowed forward with truth, seeking to plow up the hard, dry soil of their heart, graciously exposing their heart that they may hopefully repent. *As we speak hard truth to those we love that they may be saved and grow in the grace of obedience to God's Word, don't let ridicule deter you. Love them enough to continue to speak hard truth*.

And let's be careful, for the very thing that the Pharisees fell prey to, we can as well. We have a tendency to make money an idol and love possessions too much. What's worse, we not only tolerate it but we spiritualize it. We change God's Word to fit our materialistic desires instead of changing our materialistic desires to fit God's Word. (Anyabwile) *We should not make the mistake of thinking God values something because we value it*. Yet, often we do that. We think and feel a certain way, so we ignore or manipulate God's Word to convince ourselves that God thinks and feels like us. May it never be!

(1 Tim 6:9–10) *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. When money/wealth become your*

*idol, you will abandon godliness and begin to compromise your faith. (Heb 13:5) **Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."** Money is not our savior in hard times. Be content with what you have and trust your true Savior who will never leave you or forsake you. If the love of money is overtaking you, start giving in significant ways to gospel efforts and those in need. Let money lose its idolatrous place in your life that your love may be for God alone.*

Despite their ridicule of Him, Jesus pressed into them.

V. 15 The Pharisees operated on a system of works-righteousness, thinking their salvation and approval from God was achieved by their strict obedience to the Law. Strictly devoted to the Law, ceremonies, and rituals, even adding more laws to the existing Law, the Pharisees worked to get approval from God AND others to get attention, praise, and recognition from them - to be seen as right before God in the eyes of the people and justify themselves before others. Instead of admitting their unrighteousness, they set out to prove their righteous worth before God/others. A religious system sure to fail. They may have convinced others of their "holiness," but they didn't convince God. They may have been highly regarded by others, but not by God. He saw their sinful hearts. He saw their idols. He saw their covetousness, greed, and love of money. He saw their pride, desiring public recognition for their external holiness. He saw that they loved themselves more than

God. He saw their prideful trust in their law-keeping to earn salvation. He saw how their hearts despised Jesus, God in the flesh. Though others may have applauded them in their false religion and hypocrisy, it was an abomination to God. And this should have terrified them. (Matt 23:25–28) ***"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.***

We might be able to fool people, the preacher, friends, even our family in appearing to be someone we are not. But God sees our sinful hearts. You won't hide your sin from God. **"God knows my heart"** You can't work your way out of a sinful heart and just start being good and righteous so God and others see you as good. No, you have to face your sin head on and admit it before God, confessing that you fall short of God's standard of perfect righteousness. Instead of trying to appear holy to make up for our sin, we admit we are not holy because of our sin. And turning from our sin in repentance, we put our faith in what Jesus did for us so we may be declared righteous before God. So what did He do?

(1 John 4:10) *He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to take God's wrath for our sin, the wrath that we deserve, which for us would be eternal hell. When He died, He paid the penalty for our sin. When He rose victoriously over sin and death, He showed that the penalty for sin had been paid in full. (2 Cor 5:21) *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Though we are not righteous and can't be righteous to meet God's perfect standard, God offers to give us as a gift the righteousness of Jesus and credit it to our account. **Double imputation.** (Rom 5:1) *Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Contrary to what the Pharisees believed, we aren't made right with God by obeying the law. We can't obey it perfectly and self-justify ourselves (Rom 3.20). No, we are made right through our faith in what Christ did for us. So, if we repent of our sin and put our faith in Christ's work for us, God will declare us, the unrighteous, righteous! We will stand before Him, not in our unrighteousness, but clothed in Christ's righteousness, justified and made right before God. No more condemnation. Freely forgiven. Then, He begins to make us new. He begins to lead us in a life of obedience to His Word, a life of repenting of our sin. This new lifestyle is not just a mask trying to convince people we are something we are not. How exhausting, frustrating, and useless is that! **Scam Caller** Oh no, this

new life isn't a scam. This new life comes from a real changed heart, a heart that now wants to obey God out of love for He who loved us first. A heart that wants to glorify Him. A heart being changed by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. On the great day of judgment, it will not matter what people think of us, but what God thinks of us. So we aren't just satisfied with living hypocritical lives, trying to appear holy but not declared holy by God. On that day, we want to stand in the perfect righteousness of Christ because we have trusted Him as our Savior/Lord.

Further, regarding when Jesus says: *For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God*, we must note that we should be living for the things that God esteems, according to His Word, not the things that are exalted among men that are contrary to His Word. We don't live for riches, status, worldly pleasures, and accumulating for ourselves. We live for holiness, prayer, Bible study, faith, worship, communion with God/His people, evangelism, loving our neighbor, giving our resources generously to the needy and gospel efforts.

Jesus continued. **V. 16** John the Baptist's ministry overlapped the old covenant period of the Law/Prophets that looked forward to the Messiah's coming and the new covenant period that began with Jesus, the Messiah. The Pharisees, so proud of their dedication to the Law and Prophets, not only fell way short of obeying them, but missed He to whom the Law and Prophets pointed.

(Jesus, John 5:39–40) *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* They missed their Messiah and the good news of the Kingdom that He came preaching, which is not that you earn your way into the Kingdom through your self-effort of obedience to the Law/Prophets as the Pharisees thought, but that you come in through repentance of your sin and faith in Jesus, receiving the grace and forgiveness He offers, and living obediently under His rule and reign. When people, many of them the tax collectors/sinners, heard that good news, they weren't passive about it like the Pharisees were. They forced their way into the Kingdom, letting nothing stop them from coming to Jesus. Ironically, the very people that the Pharisees thought less worthy than they to be in God's Kingdom were moving with intention to enter it, while the Pharisees stayed outside of it in their self-righteous delusion. *How about you? Will you be indifferent to Jesus, or will you run with intention and purpose to Him, receiving His grace and forgiveness through your repentance and faith? Christian, are you single-minded in your focus, denying yourself, taking up your cross, following Him with all the necessary sacrifice, passion, dedication, perseverance, endurance, and pursuit?*

And Jesus wanted to be clear. The good news of the Kingdom didn't mean the Law was voided out. **V. 17** (Explain dot) Every bit of the Law would be fulfilled

and is still valid. We aren't under the ceremonial law and sacrifices anymore because Jesus fulfilled them. They aren't voided, they are fulfilled! Everything spoken of in the Law/Prophets will be fulfilled. God's moral laws in the Old Testament reflect His character, so they are still valid and we are still under obligation to obey them. And so to continue exposing their sinful hearts, Jesus brings up the example of divorce to give these self-righteous Pharisees an example of how they didn't uphold God's law and moral standard concerning marriage. **V. 18** You see, some were going against God's original design for the permanence of the one flesh, marriage union, and misusing **Deut 24.1-4** to find loopholes and give permission for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. One rabbi taught a man could divorce his wife if she burned his dinner, another if he found a prettier woman (in either case, I have no grounds to divorce Steph). (Cole) *He (Jesus) is saying that by playing loose with God's standard for marriage, they were committing adultery. Even though they could justify themselves before men, claiming that they were under the letter of the Mosaic Law, what they were doing was detestable in the eyes of God.* Jesus makes clear God's ideal of marriage in **Matt. 19.3-9** God's ideal for marriage is as it was from the beginning with Adam/Eve, one flesh, permanent, with only one biblical ground for divorce, that being adultery because it defiles the one flesh union. But even in those cases, divorce is not required, but permitted. In my opinion, repentance,

forgiveness, and reconciliation should be worked toward diligently before pursuing divorce. But should one get a divorce on the grounds of adultery, then remarriage is allowed. Paul allows for divorce when a spouse who is an unbeliever deserts the believing spouse (I Cor 7.15). Whether remarriage is allowed after is debated (1 Cor 7.39). To be unbiblically divorced and remarried is to commit adultery. Marriage is held in such low esteem in today's culture. For many, marrying a spouse is like getting a job - find another if you don't like it. That's not God's ideal. Singles, know God's ideal and don't enter marriage lightly. If you have been divorced on unbiblical grounds and haven't repented, do so. If you were remarried after an unbiblical divorce and haven't confessed your sin of adultery that your remarriage began in, do so. It doesn't mean you leave the marriage you are in. Be faithful in your marriage union. Stay married and do this one the right way.

But don't miss the context here. Jesus brings this up to give one example of how the Pharisees justified themselves but fell short of God's standard. They should have seen their sin, as should we all when the perfectly righteous law of God exposes our how we fail miserably in unrighteousness and are under the curse of divine judgment for our sin. The law exposes our sin and need for a Savior. And praise be to God, He gave us a Savior. Jesus became the curse for us, taking the wrath for our sin that we may be forgiven and declared righteous before the holy God. Oh, what matchless mercy/grace.