

DON'T BE THAT PHARISEE

John 9:13-34

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. There's a popular phrase that people use today: Don't be that guy. When someone acts like an idiot and you want them to stop you say, "Don't be that guy." In other words, don't be the kind of guy who acts like that. Those guys are so annoying. They ruin it for everyone. Don't be that guy. Let me give you some examples of "that guy." You see them a lot in traffic. It's the guy who stops traffic on Ambassador Caffery to go to Chic-Fil-A, even though there's a sign that tells you not to do that. It's the guy who decides to take a left turn onto Ambassador Caffery during rush hour when leaving Chic-Fil-A. It's the guy who gets a special muffler to make his truck so loud that it hurts your ears. It's the guy who turns the music up in his car so loud that he makes your car vibrate. Don't be that guy.
2. Today we are going to look at the Pharisees – a Jewish religious group who lived in the time of Jesus. As much as I don't want you to be that guy, I don't want you to be that pharisee even more.
3. Who were the Pharisees?
 - i. They were a religious group within Judaism.
 - ii. At the time of Christ, there were about 6,000 of them.
 - iii. Their name means "separated ones."
 - iv. Being a Pharisee was not a vocation; they were a brotherhood, or a *chaburah*.
 - v. Keeping the law was their passion. They even counted the laws in the Torah – 613. 365 negative commands, coinciding with the number of days in the year, and 248 positive commands, coinciding with the number of bones and main organs in the body.
 - vi. You became a Pharisee by taking an oath before three witnesses to spend all your life observing every detail of the law.
 - vii. But they did not just keep the law of Moses, they kept "the tradition of the elders." On several occasions that asked Jesus why He and His disciples did not follow the "tradition of the elders." What is the "tradition of the elders"? The Rabbis (Jewish teachers) believed that God gave Moses two laws: The written law and the oral law. The written law contained the commandments; this is what we have in the Bible. The oral law, spoken to Moses but not written down, was an explanation on the meaning and application of the law to daily life. This oral law was passed down verbally and committed to memory from generation to generation. Eventually the oral law was written down in AD 200; it is known as the Mishnah. In AD 400 some rabbis wrote a commentary on the Mishnah called the Talmud.

Together the Mishnah and the Talmud are referred to as the Talmud, and orthodox Jews still study, learn, and devote themselves to the Talmud.

- viii. The oral law was to be a hedge around the law to make sure that one didn't even come close to breaking the law.
- ix. Let me give you some examples of the oral law. The written law contained general principles. The purpose of the oral law was to help you apply the law in every situation in life. For example, one of the Ten Commandments was to keep the Sabbath. It was a very general command – on the seventh day, do not work. But the rabbis asked, "What constitutes work?" So, they sought to define exactly which actions were work, and which actions were not. For example, first they decided that tying a knot was work, so it was forbidden. But then they had to define a knot. So this is what it says. "The following are the knots the making of which renders a man guilty; the knot of camel drivers and that of sailors; and as one is guilty by reason of tying them, so also of untying them." However, a knot which could be tied or untied with one hand was allowed. It goes on to say, "a woman may tie up a slit in her shift and the strings of her cap and those of her girdle, the straps of shoes or sandals, of skins of wine and oil." Another example is that it was forbidden to take a journey on the Sabbath (Ex 16:29). But what constituted a journey? So, they said that a journey was anything more than 1,000 yards from your house. Another example is carrying burdens, which was forbidden on the Sabbath (Jer 17:21-24). But what exactly was a burden? So they said a burden was "food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to amount a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, and so on."
- x. The Pharisees believed that the oral law, or the "tradition of the elders," was just as inspired and authoritative as the written law. This is why they often clashed with Jesus. They condemned Jesus and His disciples for breaking the Sabbath, but Jesus didn't break the Sabbath, He only broke their traditions.
 - 1. For example, as the disciples were walking, they broke off some heads of grain in field and ate them. The Pharisees condemned them because they considered this to be work.
 - 2. When Jesus would heal someone on the Sabbath, they would condemn Him for working on the Sabbath.
 - 3. They condemned Jesus' followers for not washing their hands before eating according to their traditions. They had a special way to wash their hand. William Barclay explains, "First the hand was held upright and the water was poured over it in such a way that it ran right to the wrist; then the hand was held pointing down and the water was poured in such a way that it ran from the wrist to the

finger-tips. This was done with each hand in turn; and then each palm was cleansed by rubbing it with the fist of the other hand. The Jewish ceremonial law insisted that this should be done not only at the beginning of a meal but also between courses. If it was not done the hands were technically unclean.”

- xi. The Pharisees were highly respected by the people; they were seen as the most devoted, and the most learned. They were the teachers in the synagogues. And they had a lot of political power. So, they didn't like it when Jesus started getting a lot of attention. They were jealous of Him.
- xii. Most of the Pharisees were also highly hypocritical. Their focus was not on pleasing God, but on impressing people with how holy they were. So, it really bothered them when Jesus publicly called them out and condemned them.
- xiii. Eventually it was the Pharisees who became the arch enemy of Jesus. They were the ones that conspired with Judas to kill Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus called them...
 - a. Hypocrites. Mt 23:13
 - b. Children of hell. Mt 23:15
 - c. Blind fools. Mt 23:17
 - d. Blind guides. Mt 23:24
 - e. Whitewashed tombs. Mt 23:27
 - f. Luke called them lovers of money. Lk 16:14
 - 2. Jesus condemned them for...
 - a. Doing everything for show. Mt 23:5
 - b. Honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him. Mt 15:8
 - c. Preventing others from finding eternal life in Christ. Mt 23:13
 - d. He said they were going to hell. Mt 23:33
 - e. He prophesied that eventually they would kill His servants. Mt 23:34
- xiv. The vast majority of the Jews rejected Christ, and that is because they were under the spell of the Pharisees, their spiritual leaders.
- xv. So, Jesus told His followers, “Don't be like the Pharisees.” He said, “Don't follow their example (Mt 23:1-3). He told them to be on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees (Lk 12:1).
- xvi. So today we're going to look at a story and see how to not be like the Pharisees. In particular, we're going to look at three sins to avoid.

II. TEXT

- 1. 13 They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. 14 The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight.

- i. This is happening right after Jesus healed a man born blind.
- 2. "He put mud on my eyes," he told them. "I washed and I can see."
- 3. 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.
- 4. 17 Again they asked the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?"
- 5. "He's a prophet," he said.
- 6. 18 The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight.
- 7. 19 They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"
- 8. 20 "We know this is our son and that he was born blind," his parents answered. 21 "But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. 23 This is why his parents said, "He's of age; ask him."
- 9. 24 So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."
 - i. "Give glory to God." Rather than Jesus. This was also a way of saying, "Speak the truth before God."
- 10. 25 He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"
- 11. 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"
- 12. 27 "I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?"
 - i. The blind man was getting frustrated. He had already told them everything he knew. He was he was born blind, and then Jesus healed him. Even the man's parents testified to this.
- 13. 28 They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from."
- 14. 30 "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. 32 Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."
- 15. 34 "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

III. THREE SINS TO AVOID

1. Putting your own ideas above Scripture.

- i. **John 9:16** Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he doesn’t keep the Sabbath.”
- ii. Jesus healed the blind man on the Sabbath, so the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. William Barclay said that Jesus broke the Sabbath in three ways:
 1. By making mud. The Pharisees followed all kinds of specific rules about the Sabbath.
 - a. A man may not fill a dish with oil and put it beside a lamp and put the end of the wick in it.
 - b. A man may not extinguish a lamp on the Sabbath to spare the lamp or the oil or the wick.
 - c. A man may not go out on the Sabbath with sandals shod with nails.
 - d. A man may not cut his fingernails or pull out hair of his head or his beard.
 - e. Kneading, or working moistened clay into a paste, was forbidden.
 2. By healing. Since it was against the law to work on the Sabbath, they said that it was against the law to help a sick person the Sabbath. So, they said that the only healing that you could do on the Sabbath was in life-threatening situations. You could not set a dislocated shoulder or hand. If a wall fell on someone, only enough rubble could be removed to find out how badly the person was injured. If they weren’t injured too badly, then they had to be left until the end of the Sabbath. Obviously the blind man was not in a life-threatening situation, so they argued that Jesus violated the Sabbath by healing him.
 3. By using spit on the Sabbath.
 - a. Fasting spit, or spit first thing in the morning before you eat anything, was used as a form of medicine. It was believed to have healing properties. And it was expressly forbidden to use spit on the Sabbath. “As to fasting spittle, it is not lawful to put it so much as upon the eyelids.”
- iii. So, the Pharisees rejected Jesus because He broke the Sabbath. Obviously the real Messiah would not break the Sabbath.
- iv. But in reality Jesus did not break the Sabbath. He broke their man-made Sabbath rules, but not God’s command.
- v. The Pharisees were putting their own man-made beliefs above Scripture.
- vi. There are several ways that people do that today:
 1. They come up with their own ideas about God.

- a. "I think God is like this."
 - b. It doesn't matter what you think about God. God has already revealed Himself to us in Scripture. We need to know what Scripture says about God.
2. They believe things that contradict the Bible.
 - a. The Bible explicitly condemns homosexuality, but they say you can be a gay Christian.
 - b. The Bible explicitly condemns abortion, but they say that abortion is a woman's right, and call it healthcare.
 - c. The Bible teaches that God created plants, animals and people, according to their kind, in the week of creation, but they believe in Darwinian evolution, that all life forms evolved gradually through random, natural processes over millions of years.
 - d. The Bible teaches very clearly that Jesus is the only way to God, but they believe that there are many paths to God.
 3. They push their personal convictions upon others.
 - a. They believe that drinking alcohol is a sin, and they condemn everyone who does it.
 - b. They believe that it is a sin for a woman to wear pants or wear makeup, so they condemn all women for doing that.
 - c. They believe it is sinful to dance, so they condemn anyone who dances.
 - d. They believe it is sinful to let their kids go trick-or-treating on Halloween.
 - e. Those things may be sinful to you personally, but the Bible does not forbid them for everyone.
 4. They add to Scripture.
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church is famous for this. They have teachings that just aren't found in the Bible. The best example is the veneration of Mary. They teach her perpetual virginity, her immaculate conception, and her bodily assumption. And they pray to Mary. None of these things are found in Scripture.
- vii. Don't be that Pharisee.
 - viii. As Christians, the Bible is our foundation; the Bible is our authority. We must believe what the Bible says, and avoid contradicting it. We must speak when the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.

2. Discouraging others from following Jesus.

- i. **John 9:22** “His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue.”
- ii. The synagogue was the place where the Jews met for weekly worship. They wouldn’t always go to the temple, especially if they lived far away from Jerusalem.
- iii. To be excommunicated from the synagogue was a terrible thing, because it meant that you could not worship God in the temple or in the synagogue, but it also forbade all Jews from having anything to do with you. It was a horrible sentence.
- iv. There were two types of excommunication (William Barclay). The first was the ban, or excommunication for life. The person was publicly denounced and cursed, and cut off from Jewish society. The second was just a temporary excommunication for a month or a set period of time. Jews felt like this was being cut off from God.
- v. Jesus warned His followers that they would this would happen to them (Jn 16:2). Jn 12:42 says that many of the Jewish authorities believed in Jesus but were afraid to admit it because they feared excommunication.
- vi. This story says that the Pharisees threatened to excommunicate anyone who believed in Jesus.
- vii. **Matthew 23:13** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.”
- viii. The Pharisees discouraged people from following Jesus. Don’t be that Pharisee.
- ix. There are many ways that people discourage devotion to Christ:
 - 1. Physical abuse.
 - 2. Verbal abuse. Insults. Mockery.
 - 3. Financial abuse. We are seeing this happen in our country right now, especially in the wedding industry where bakers, florists, and photographers are being forced by the government to violate their Christian convictions.
 - 4. Professional abuse. People around the country are being fired from their jobs because of their Christian beliefs.
 - 5. Sometimes parents will try to prevent their kids from following Christ. A kid will get want to go to church, but the parents will not allow it. Or the kid wants to volunteer in church, or give a donation to the church, but the parents won’t allow it.
 - 6. Sometimes a person will discourage their spouse from following Jesus. The spouse will want to go to church, or give a tithe, or volunteer their time, and the other spouse will discourage it.

7. When my uncle got married, God called him to be a pastor, but his wife refused to be a pastor's wife, so she told him to quit the ministry or she would leave him, and she divorced him.
8. We need to be careful here. We don't think we would ever discourage someone from following Jesus, but not so fast. We all want our children to be devoted to Christ, but how devoted? What if your child felt called by God to do something dangerous for Jesus, like being an undercover missionary in a closed country like North Korea or Iran? Would you support them? What if your friend had been saving up money for years to buy a new car, but then they felt like God was calling them to give it all to the church? Would you support them? What if your child received \$50 on their birthday, and the next Sunday they go to church and hear a message on giving, and they tell you that they want to give the entire \$50 to God? Would you support them or try to talk them out of it?
9. Don't be that Pharisee.
10. **Hebrews 10:24-25** "24 And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

3. Willful unbelief.

- i. **John 9:34** "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.
- ii. After all the evidence for the miracle, the Pharisees still refused to believe.
- iii. Remember the evidence:
 1. The testimony of the blind man. **John 9:25** "I was blind, and now I can see."
 2. The testimony of his parents. **John 9:20** "We know this is our son and that he was born blind."
 3. The fact of the miracle. **John 9:33** "If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." How did Jesus do this miracle if he wasn't empowered by God? Satan wouldn't want to give sight to the blind.
 4. The uniqueness of the miracle. **John 9:32** "Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind."
- iv. Yet after all this, the Pharisees still refused to believe in Jesus. The Pharisees did not reject Christ for lack of evidence, but because they did not want to believe.
- v. Instead of being honest seekers, they were looking for an excuse to reject Jesus.

1. First, they said He couldn't be the Messiah because He performed the miracle on the Sabbath.
 2. Second, they didn't believe the blind man was really blind.
 3. Third, they said they didn't know where Jesus was from, as if that mattered (verse 29).
 4. Fourth, they said they couldn't believe the blind man because he was sinner. Remember, the Jews believed that if a person had a sickness or disability, the Jews concluded that they were a sinner. Therefore the blind man's testimony was worthless.
- vi. They weren't looking for the truth; they were looking for a reason not to believe in Jesus.
 - vii. We see this all the time today. With the developments and discoveries in science, history, archeology, astronomy, there is overwhelming evidence for the existence of God. If there is no God, then how did the universe come into being? Something cannot come from nothing. Matter doesn't create itself. Life does not come from non-life. And then when you look at all the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus – Jesus really existed; He really died; the tomb was empty according to the Jews and the Romans; there were hundreds of eye-witnesses; and the fact that these eye-witnesses were willing to die for their testimony; and the transformation of the apostle Paul who went from being a zealous persecutor of Christianity to a fearless missionary after seeing the risen Christ. There is more than enough evidence to be a Christian.
 - viii. But people don't reject Christ because of lack of evidence. They reject Christ because they don't want to believe; they don't want Jesus to be real; they don't want the Bible to be true; because they don't want to have to turn from their sins and serve God.
 - ix. But God is real, and Jesus Christ is His only Son who came to die for our sins. And anyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. The truth is that we have all been that Pharisee at some point in our lives.
 - i. We have all put our own ideas above Scripture.
 - ii. We have all discouraged others from following Jesus.
 - iii. We have all had willful unbelief.
2. But the good news is that God can forgive us and change us.
 - i. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, but he became a follower of Jesus. When Jesus died he and Joseph of Arimathea took Christ's body down from the cross, cleaned it, wrapped it in fine linen with seventy-five pounds of fragrant spices, and put Him in the tomb. He went from a Pharisee to a follower of Christ.

- ii. Paul was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. He hated Jesus and he hated Christians. His job was to hunt down Christians and put them in jail. But he became a Christian – the leading Christian missionary in the world.
- iii. How did these men change? Both them met Jesus.
- iv. Jesus is here today. Not just in the pages of Scripture, but in His Spirit. He is here, and He loves you, and He died for you, and He wants you to be saved. Will you believe in Him today