

# Matthew 23:8-12

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 09/02/2012*

## What Leaders Are Not To Be

### Prayer

Father, we are so thankful for Your tremendous love for us. It is beyond us to comprehend how You would give Your one and only Son to die for us, wicked sinners, vile. That You would send Your Son and He would willingly come, and offer Himself as a sacrifice, an acceptable sacrifice to You. Father, we are so thankful for Your love for us. And we are thankful for Your Son Jesus, Who died for our sins. Father, we are thankful that You revealed Him in Your Word. That You revealed Him in Your Gospel, that You revealed our sinfulness and the Savior, Jesus Christ. And that You use Your Word to change us, Lord God. And I pray You would do that today. I pray for those who do not know You, that You would pierce their hearts, that You would take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, You would save them, Lord God. And for those of us who do know You, those of us You have changed, that we would receive Your Word, we would allow it to do its work in our lives today. That we would set aside sin, we would simply confess it and receive Your Word implanted. So Father, we ask You to continue to bless this worship time as Your Word is brought forth. May it bring You glory and honor now. In Jesus' Name, amen.

### Sermon

What do you think of when you think of religious leaders? You know, for some of you the term "pope" might come to mind, or maybe "cardinal" or "father" or "rabbi" or "bishop" or "elder" or "reverend" or "rector" or "pastor" or "senior pastor." There are all kinds of religious titles out there. So often when you hear religious leaders' names you will hear a title and a name with that also. You will hear Pope Paul or Bishop So-and-so, or Father Larry or Cardinal Harris or Rabbi Lickstein or Reverend Roy or Pastor Bill. I mean you hear all these titles that are connected to their names, or whatever it might be. And in religious institutions, such as seminaries or whatever it might be, you have professor So-and-so or doctor So-and-so. Or if you have been to a conference, a religious conference where they are sharing the Word or whatever it might be, it is, "We welcome Dr. So-and-so!" or whatever it is.

Titles appear to be very important in the church these days. But I think we are going to see very clearly that the titles can also be a manifestation of deadly pride. And if you were with us last week, we saw very clearly that the religious false leaders were very prideful. They were authoritative, they were false religious leaders who loved the titles that man gave them. Now at this point in our study, we are going to see what leaders are not to be. And you are saying, "Well I am not a leader." Well if you will remember, Jesus is directing this first portion in Matthew 23, which we will look at today, at the multitudes and His disciples. And then He will turn from that and give His woes to the Pharisees and Scribes. And I believe we are going to see today the Lord Jesus directing His words at the disciples, so that they would not be like these Scribes and Pharisees. And I believe we need to understand as a body what true leadership

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looks like and what it does not look it and respond rightly in light of those truths. We are going to see today what leaders are not to be. And in contrast, we will see commands for God's leaders.

Again, turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 23. And we are going to be finishing up the first section. We will be looking at verses 8-12 today. And we share the context every week, and I will just share it briefly about this wonderful book of Matthew and it is so wonderful to have gone through it and to see these familiar verses in their context.

We have seen King Jesus introduced. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the King of the Jews, Who came to save His people from their sins, "The Lord is salvation." We saw the way prepared for Him by John the Baptist, that one sent to prepare the way. "Repent! For the kingdom is at hand!" We saw that Jesus came to His own, they were sitting in darkness. They were sitting in the shadow of death. You see the reality is, the Jews of this day were in rejection of the true living God, although they would name the name of Yahweh. They would name the name of the Lord. They were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. This is so applicable because so many people claim to follow Jesus Christ but yet are sitting in darkness and in death. And God is a gracious God who will not allow you to slip into eternity in your sin apart from being convicted concerning your state, no matter where you think you might be, as His Word reveals where we really are.

We saw Him call them to repentance, and the people reject Him. We saw Jesus call them an evil and adulterous generation. We saw Him begin to veil His truth from them because they had closed their ears and their eyes. So He would veil it, that they would not see and they would not hear. And we saw the leaders, who hated Him and wanted to kill Him, and we will see that continuing today. We saw very clearly Jesus coming to the last week of His life on earth here before His crucifixion. He has been ministering for a little under three years. We saw then the not so triumphal entry as the King of kings and Lord of lords comes humbly on a colt, and He is weeping as He is entering Jerusalem, Luke 19:40, we see very clearly He is weeping because they missed the day of visitation. They missed the living God coming among their midst. And they did not repent. And they would be judged.

We saw Him come to His temple, very clearly, and cleanse it from what the religious wicked leaders had made it – a robbers' den, a house of merchandise. We saw Jesus, as He cleansed it, turning it back to what it should be, as He was teaching and preaching and healing and receiving worship as the living God. We saw His authority challenged by the hypocrites. We saw the Lord Jesus then challenge the hypocrites with three parables of their condemnation. And we saw them bringing up their last questions to try to trip up the Lord Jesus. And Jesus in the end of chapter 22, turns the tables on them. And He says, "Whose Son is the Christ?" And they quoted Scripture and said, "The Son of David." Yes, they got that part right, the Christ, the Messiah is the human descendant of David, who would sit on the throne forever. But how could David in the spirit call Him "Lord"? The question is how could the Christ be human and also be Lord? And the answer is God took on human flesh. The reality that Jesus Christ is so gracious with these wicked leaders, that before His final condemnation, which we will see part of today, He gives them another opportunity to believe the truth concerning Him. And then we came into the beginning of the chapter

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last week where we saw very clearly the wickedness unveiled of the religious leaders of the day, the Scribes and the Pharisees. And we will review that in a moment.

And with that in mind, let's look at Matthew 23, and I will read the first seven verses we looked at last week. And we will look at the verses that we will study today in 8-12. Matthew 23,

***<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying: ``The Scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; <sup>3</sup> therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. <sup>4</sup> And they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. <sup>5</sup> But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. <sup>6</sup> And they love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. [Matthew 23:1-7]***

That is what we looked at last week. And today we are going to continue in this portion as we see the Lord Jesus now address, I believe, His disciples.

***<sup>8</sup> ``But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. <sup>11</sup> But the greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. [Matthew 23:8-12]***

Matthew 23 is broken in this way I believe – we see Jesus' initial warning in verses 1-7 concerning these false religious leaders, unveiling their hypocrisy and their wickedness, their prideful love of man's approval. And then we see in verse 8-12 here, Jesus moves to command His disciples I believe. And then in 13 through the end, we have Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. And at the end we have a brief look into the heart of a Savior who is weeping over their rejection. So today we are going to see the Lord Jesus move from unveiling these wicked people to actually commanding His disciples not to be that way. And from this, we should learn what leaders should not be, and very clearly it is important that if you are not a leader in the church, that you understand what godly leaders look like. And these principles we see will apply to everyone because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted. Again, we are looking at Matthew 23. And I think we need to review the first seven verses. We will do that very quickly here.

We need to remember Jesus unveiled, He took the cover off, He revealed the true nature of unbelieving religious wicked false teachers. We saw that He revealed their hypocrisy and their self-elevation. Notice in verse 1 it says, "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes." Then He spoke to the multitudes – He has just given the Pharisees and Sadducees another chance to believe. And as you remember, at the end of chapter 22, and we saw in the parallel passages, that they did not respond! They should have responded,

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“What must we do to be saved?” They did not say a thing. And the Lord Jesus now turns to the disciples and the multitudes in this same scene in the temple, a couple days before His crucifixion.

Now remember, the Pharisees were the strictest religious sect, as Paul would say in Acts 26:5, he was a Pharisee. It meant “separated ones.” The Pharisees were religious, self-righteous, legalistic, nationalistic isolationists on their way to hell. These religious leaders had rejected Christ. Now the Pharisees as a group had rejected Christ. There were one or two who did not ultimately reject Christ, (there were about 6,000 total in this day), but there were a couple that had responded as we see, and would respond, like Nicodemus. But by and large, the Pharisees who stayed in this manner, they had rejected Christ, as we will see.

And there were the Scribes, they were the experts in the Law. They were not priests. They were the experts, they were Israel’s legal elites, they were the ones who were the authorities on the Law of Moses. And remember last week we saw the characteristics of these false teachers. One was they were self-appointed. Verse 1, “<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying: ‘The Scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;’” [Matthew 23:1-2] The chair of Moses spoke of those who authoritatively gave instruction and interpretation for the Law of Moses for Israel. They have elevated themselves. Jesus made the point, “They have elevated themselves in the chair of Moses.” And if you will remember, we looked at many passages. We looked at Jeremiah 23:22, where the Lord says, “I did not send those false prophets. If I would have sent them, they would have spoken My words to My people and turned them from their wicked ways.” You see, false teachers are not sent by the living God. They are self-appointed. And we will see these Scribes and Pharisees are on their way to hell, they are not saved. And anyone who is doing God’s work in an unsaved state is self-appointed. They have seated themselves in the seat or chair of Moses.

We saw very clearly, not only were they self-appointed, they were religious hypocrites. And we will see that throughout this passage today. Verse 3, “<sup>3</sup>therefore all that they tell you...” – and this is because they are the “religious leaders” as we discussed, and that is the context here in the Word of God. He is not validating their traditions they had used to invalidate the Word of God. He had condemned them very clearly earlier. He had warned His disciples in chapter 16 of the leaven of the Scribes and the Pharisees, of the leaven, their false teaching. But here He is saying, “But when they do say the Word, do what they say. But do not do what they do.” Do not do what they do. “Therefore all they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.” [Matthew 23:3] That is the characteristic of those who claim the name of Christ but yet are not saved. Did not Jesus say, “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, lord, did we not do all this stuff?’” And He will say, “Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practice lawlessness.” And He would give the illustration about those who hear the Word and act upon it, those being built on the solid rock. Those who would hear the Word and do not act upon it, those on the sand who will experience complete destruction because they are not saved.

So we have these wicked hypocrites. The outside looks clean, but the inside is full of dead men’s bones. And they laid down heavy religious burdens, we saw that in verse four. “<sup>4</sup> ‘And they tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a

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finger.” [Matthew 23:4] He is talking about the religious burdens the Pharisees would lay on the people, those things they would tell them they had to do to be right with God. A works based salvation. And Israel was like sheep without a shepherd. They were burdened down by the wickedness of these false teachers and Jesus would say to them in chapter 11, <sup>28</sup> **“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” [Matthew 11:28]** And for some of you here, some of you are burdened down by the religious burdens that false teaching has placed on you. Or you come here and you do not know Christ, and you are trying to do everything I am sharing. And you are weighed down! Jesus says, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Acknowledge your sin. Humble yourself before God. Jesus Christ will save you and then He will enable you with a changed heart to do what He says.

They were self-elevating, they were prideful also. They were motivated by the love of man’s approval. Remember we saw this last week. Verse 5, <sup>5</sup> “But they do all their deeds (not a few of them, they do all their deeds) to be noticed by men...” That term “noticed”, *theathēnai*, we get our word “theater,” it is a show. They do everything to be noticed by men! It is all a sham! And maybe it is a sham for you. Maybe you come here to be noticed by people. “Hey, I’m going to church!” It is a sham! Notice He gives them illustrations. “...for they broaden their phylacteries...” Those were those little tubes that held verses on their heads and made them look like they were very spiritual. And they made those larger so the verses were larger. And they lengthen the end of their religious garments to make them appear to be more religious. And notice, verse 6, they love, they *love*, the place of honor at banquets. “Sit up here, Rabbi So-and-so.” Inside they love it! They *love* the place of honor! That is where their hearts are at.

Verse 6, “...and the chief seats in the synagogues.” Those were the seats of authority, religious authority in the synagogues, where you would teach from. They *loved* that. Oh and they love this too. Verse 7, “and respectful greetings in the marketplace.” You know it is said historically speaking that they would walk through and people would almost bow down and say, “Oh! We are so glad to see you!” There were these greetings of respect and they loved them! They loved them. And they also love, as we saw at the end of our portion last week, the titles that man gives religiously. “...and being called (end of verse 7) by men, Rabbi.” They loved it. They loved continually, habitually loved (as the text would share) being called Rabbi by men. They loved elevated religious titles. It is an evidence of someone who does not know Christ. It is an evidence of self-love and pride, not love of Christ. In the end of 1 Corinthians, the Lord Jesus says, or the Lord says through Paul, “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed!” You see if you love the Lord, if you have been changed, you are going to hate the things that you do that are contrary to His Word. “Who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

So they continually love being called by men, Rabbi. This term Rabbi meant “my master” or “my teacher.” But it really had a grand sense about it. There was a lot more to it. They loved the “Oh Dr. So-and-so!” Or “Oh Pastor So-and-so!” They loved these titles. And it is the manifestation of pride and self-love. And the Lord Jesus is going to now address His disciples and tell them, “Don’t you ever be this way. Don’t you *ever* be like this. Don’t you *ever* rob the glory from God that is due Him alone by taking credit for His work,” we will see. The Lord Jesus has unveiled the hypocrisy and extreme pride of these religious leaders

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that are on their way to hell. And you say, "I don't see that they are on their way to hell there." But they are on their way to hell, if you look a little farther, verse 15. He is directly condemning them, chapter 23 verse 15. <sup>15</sup> **"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."** [Matthew 23:15] Down to verse 33, at the bottom. Chapter 23 verse 33. <sup>33</sup> **"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?"** [Matthew 23:33]

You see, if your inside is not changed, if you are still in your sin, you are going to hell. And God is a gracious God to reveal that to you. And He sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins. And it is through faith in Christ that we are redeemed, we are delivered from darkness into His marvelous light. But these leaders were on their way to hell. They were hypocrites. They did nothing for the glory of God because they were not saved. They did everything for their own glory. And it included the love of titles. And this is what our Lord keys off of and then turns to address (I believe), His disciples and the crowd. Verse 8: <sup>8</sup> "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. <sup>11</sup>But the greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup>And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.'" [Matthew 23:8-12]

Did you notice the contrast between verses 7 and 8? They loved being called Rabbi, *but* do not be called Rabbi. And we are going to see it is in the context of how these religious leaders see these titles. That will help us understand this passage. He is contrasting the love of being called Rabbi and then He is talking to, I believe, His disciples – and the multitudes, but really the disciples. "Do not be called Rabbi." And He expands that contrast to go beyond the initial situation that did apply to those who had seated themselves in the chair of Moses. He goes on, I believe, to address all those areas in which God is impugned by man, taking titles and the glory for themselves rather than for God. <sup>8</sup> "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. (that is one) <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ." [Matthew 23:8-10]

Notice there are three things the Lord Jesus shares. And I believe He is going to say very clearly, "Do not take on religious titles with the underlying reality behind it that only truly describe what God is doing." What God is doing. Some of you who are saying, maybe, "This doesn't make sense. The Apostle Paul called himself and Apostle and a teacher and a preacher, the Word of God declares that." We see that Christ has appointed Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers – Ephesians 4. We see in the Scriptures there are those who would lead the church. We will see it in Hebrews 13, we see it throughout. Those who rule – 1 Timothy 5:17. What does he mean here?" I believe we are going to see He is speaking of addressing someone religiously with a title that elevates and gives them the credit, only due to God alone. These wicked religious leaders were stealing God's glory in the context of the titles they were receiving. Folks, it is not the title per say, it is what is behind the title. It is the motive behind what is being spoken. He is not prohibiting titles per say. He is prohibiting the exaltation of someone through that title. You see very clearly, no one is to be exalted except God alone. God is the only exalted one.

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Let me give you some examples. The Corinthians were dealing with the issue of pride. And they were elevating good guys. But we will see what Paul says about that. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3. And the Apostle Paul straightens them out. They were putting something behind these people's names that was not valid and genuine. They were giving credit to these people and elevating *them* rather than *God* who was doing the work *through* them. First Corinthians 3:4. Now he has heard there are divisions and he believes it; and he says in verse 4, 1 Corinthians 3:4,

**<sup>4</sup> For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos,"** (Now those were good guys, by the way) **are you not mere men?** **<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?** (Here is the answer) **Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.** (They are servants of the living God, the Lord did it) **<sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.** **<sup>7</sup> So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything,** (Don't elevate anyone religiously! Don't accept that elevation because if they are truly following the Lord, the Lord is doing it through them, and He should get all the glory. But false teachers don't do that. They want the glory. They want the glory.) **but God who causes the growth. [1 Corinthians 3:4-7]**

Take a look at 2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 5. Well, I'll read it for you. He says, **<sup>5</sup> Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, [2 Corinthians 3:5]** We are not adequate to have anything coming from us! The context was the preaching of the Word of God, which was the aroma of life to those being saved and the aroma of death to those perishing. Galatians 6:2-3, **<sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.** (Serve one another in that context. Love one another in that real context) **<sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. [Galatians 6:2-3]** If you think you are something, as evidenced by the titles you receive, you are deceiving yourself. If you think you are something when you are nothing, you deceive yourself. We have a tremendous God who gives us a tremendous privilege to serve Him, but if it is by faith then it is all from Him and nothing from us. And He is the only one who deserves the glory in every aspect, the Trinity ministers within the body of Christ as we will see.

John 15:5, Jesus says, **"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me,** (that is "remaining in Me") **and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." [John 15:5]** Apart from Christ, faith in Jesus Christ, the redeemed soul, faith in Jesus Christ, we can do nothing. We have nothing to boast about, except the Lord. You may still be in 1 Corinthians. Let me read 1 Corinthians 1:26. They had a pride problem and Paul was addressing that. And maybe you have a pride problem; I think we all do. And it comes up and we need to address it right away. It is terrible, horrible sin. Those who are apart from Christ live in the context of pride. Those who have come to Christ are tempted in pride. First Corinthians 1:26,

**<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;** **<sup>27</sup> but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,** **<sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the despised, God**

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***has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,*** (He is saying basically “In general, God did not save all the people who are the super duper great ones. He saved the foolish and base and weak things that He would nullify the things that are.” He says here,) <sup>29</sup> ***that no man should boast before God.*** <sup>30</sup> ***But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus,*** (You did not do it. It is by His doing you are in Christ Jesus) ***who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*** <sup>31</sup> ***that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." [1 Corinthians 1:26-31]***

False teachers believe they are hot stuff. And they love the titles that give them glory. Genuine leaders are never, ever to do this. And we as believers are never to take the credit for anything. For anything. Because apart from Him, we can do nothing. The Lord is saying basically, “Do not take any title with the implied meaning behind that pulls the glory from God and gives it to you.”

Notice Jesus now illustrates with three areas that false religious leaders pridefully usurp God’s authority and glory. Areas that we are never to usurp. There are three areas. The first one I believe directly applies to the Scribes and Pharisees. But He expands in other areas, which we have seen very clearly, and we do and will see.

Back to our passage, verse 8, <sup>8</sup>“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.” [Matthew 23:8-10] Three prohibited commands of receiving titles. “Do not be called. Do not call.” Three prohibitions about titles that would elevate and give glory only due God to man. Three specific examples where God’s glory is stolen by wicked, prideful man.

The first one, these Scribes and Pharisees had seated themselves in the chair of Moses. They were the authoritative teachers of the day. They loved the term “My master, my teacher – you are the one!” They got all the credit and they *loved* it! And Jesus said, “Do not be called Rabbi, (it meant “my teacher, my master”) for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.”

“Don’t you dare, disciples, be like the religious Scribes, hypocrites, the Pharisees, who accept an exalted term in the sense that *they* are the authorities, that it is from *their* abilities that they are bringing forth the teaching rather than God. For One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. You are all on the same level! There is no exaltation! One is your Teacher.”

And folks, if you have a teaching gift or if you are serving Christ by teaching, you are not ultimately the teacher. You see, the Spirit of God does the teaching through you, if you are abiding in Christ. “Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher. You are all brothers.” Folks, all of the teaching gifts and the spiritual gifts come from the Spirit of God, as He willed and desired – 1 Corinthians 12. Turn there with me, 1 Corinthians 12:4,

***<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who***

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**works all things in all persons** (God is the one who is doing it! And go down to verse 11)...<sup>11</sup> **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. [1 Corinthians 12:4-6,11]**

No human being can teach for the living God apart from the Spirit functioning in that human being. They can teach, but they cannot do it for God. God is the Teacher, there is *one* true teacher who receives all the credit, not the people with the names “teacher.” “For you are all brothers.” It is a warning to His disciples, “Don’t ever self-elevate yourself. It is God doing it through you. Don’t let anyone call you that. Do not take on a title that gives *you* the credit for teaching, when it is God that does it.

Folks, in Scripture we see the Spirit of God is the one who illumines the Word of God. He is the One who teaches us. We see in John chapter 14, if you want to turn there, Jesus is speaking to His disciples. And He is talking about the fact that He is going to be going, and He is going to send the Spirit, the Helper is going to come. John 14:25. Jesus says,

**<sup>25</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, (Jesus says) while abiding with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” [John 14:25-26]**

He is going to teach the Word and bring to remembrance the Word that Christ spoke. First John 2:27, I can read it for you,

**<sup>27</sup> And as for you, (He says) the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, (We know the Spirit of God abides in us) and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. [1 John 2:27]**

The reality is that the Spirit of God teaches us and instructs us. God is the only One receiving the credit if we are taught. When I come here today and I preach the Word of God, and if you are taught, it is not because of me. I have the privilege of being His servant to share His Word. But it is the Spirit of God through the Word of God that teaches you and addresses your hearts. “For One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.” Don’t you dare take credit for the preaching and teaching that God does through you by His Spirit. Don’t ever let someone say, “Hey Teacher,” and exalt yourself in your heart – “Yeah, yeah I am a teacher!” in that sense. “Wow, Pastor!” Don’t ever accept those terms in the sense where it elevates you and the glory does not go to the living God. Otherwise it is pride. It is like the false teachers.

“Do not be called Rabbi.” That means, “My teacher,” even “My exalted teacher.” “...for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.” “You are all on the same plane.”

Brother and sister, do not be like the false teachers. Do not elevate people like false teachers like to be elevated. If you are someone who has a teaching gift, do not allow people to elevate you. Do not allow your heart to be raised up within you. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing. It is all Him.

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Folks, the Scribes and Pharisees were false teachers. They loved being exalted, they were in the chair of Moses. They loved being called “My exalted teacher, Rabbi.” They loved it. But you say, “Wait a second, what about respect?” Folks, God needs to get all the glory but we can acknowledge the reality of the work He does through submitted, faithful servants. First Thessalonians 5, let’s turn there for a second. First Thessalonians 5:12. God gets all the glory, otherwise it is sin. It is pride. Paul tells the Thessalonians,

***12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (That you appreciate, get to know them. The word means “get to know.” And then he says,) 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love (That means super abounding, far and beyond; it just abounds way beyond. Why?) because of their work. [1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a]***

You see, the reality is those who have teaching gifts, those who give you instruction, those who lead you, have a tremendously blessed opportunity and job to share the Word of God and you should esteem them highly because God has chosen to bring His Word forth through them. But that does not elevate them, it is God that is doing it through them. Godly leaders trust Christ and abide in Him and they will defer the glory to Him all the time because they know they could not do it. Leaders are to be highly esteemed because of their work, because of what the Spirit of God does through them. He gets all the glory. “You are all brothers.” We are on the same plane. Never allow yourself to take a title or exalt someone else in the sphere of being a teacher. I see this in the evangelical church a lot. I see people who are probably believers, not false teachers, who have succumbed to this wicked pride. I would stay away from that. I would stay away from that. We are all on the same plane.

We see the titles in church, “Doctor So-and-so,” “Professor So-and-so,” “Let’s introduce Doctor So-and-so.” Folks, if underneath that title that person is exalted in any way, shape or form, it is sin. It is sin. Proud men crave recognition from man. Proud false teachers crave spiritual recognition from men. Now I find it is very interesting that the Lord does not stop at this point, just addressing their love of being called Rabbi. He actually continues to reveal other roles of the Trinity that are usurped, the glory is usurped from wicked mankind, that which leaders should never do!

Notice He says in the second portion, <sup>9</sup> “And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.” [Matthew 23:9] He gives another prohibition. “Don’t call anyone on earth your father.” You say, “What a second! My kids just called me ‘father’ this morning. Did they break the Word?” Folks, in the context, He is speaking of religious false teachers who love the approval of men, who are taking credit for what God does. Yes, kids you can call your parents “fathers.” But you should never call them “father” in the sense that they were the ones who brought about your salvation. Do not ever give your parents or anyone else the glory. Praise the Lord for them if they shared the Word. But we will see very clearly we should never take credit for anything God does. Let me share some passages about the Father that we clearly see, what is His role that people would usurp and take credit for. You see, God is one. There is one God revealed in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And each has differing roles. Look at Ephesians 1:3. It is speaking of the redeemed, those who have been delivered from darkness, those who have become children of God. Paul writes, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:3,

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**<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (that's the Father, right?) who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (The Father has brought forth these blessings in Christ) <sup>4</sup> just as He (speaking of the Father) chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, (God the Father chose whom He would save) that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through (the means of) Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. [Ephesians 1:3-6]**

The Father is the one who chose you! He is the one that predestined you. He is the one that brought about and sent His Son to die for you. We have so many people in the church these days that say, "We saved 3,000 people!" You did not save anybody! God saved. If there 3,000 that are saved, it is all to His glory. Some other passages, Ephesians 3, a little farther up, verse 14. He says, <sup>14</sup> **For this reason, (Paul says) I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, [Ephesians 3:14-15]** He is the originator. Ephesians 4:4, <sup>4</sup> **There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. [Ephesians 4:4-6]**

James 1:17 (you can look at Hebrews 12, I had that on my list. We have a loving Father who disciplines us; He is the one that causes us to share in His holiness through His discipline.) James 1:17, let's turn there together. James 1:17. You see there are a lot of people religiously speaking taking credit with their titles or their actions for what God the Father has done and is doing. James 1:17, and Jesus is saying, "You disciples, don't you ever do this. Don't you ever call anyone Father in this way. Don't you ever do this. There is one Father and He is in heaven." James 1:17,

**<sup>17</sup> Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. <sup>18</sup> In the exercise of His will (that's the Father's will) He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. [James 1:17-18]**

One last passage. Turn to 1 Peter 1:3. **<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [1 Peter 1:3]**

The Father caused us to be born again through Jesus Christ by the resurrection of Him from the dead. He gets all the glory for salvation. Yes, we give Christ the glory for His sacrifice. And that is the means in which He did it, and we praise Him, we give Him all the glory and honor. But yet the Father chose us. And it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Spiritually speaking we have no father but our Father Who is in heaven. Spiritually speaking. He is the one who pre-ordained and brought about salvation through Christ, sending His only Son, His beloved Son for us. It was His plan. And Jesus willingly came. He is in heaven over all. But folks, there are wicked men on earth who exalt themselves, believing they are spiritual fathers in a sense. Now folks, the Apostle Paul

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recognized that he was a spiritual father in the sense that he shared the Gospel to some, but he never took the credit for it. It was God who brought about salvation. But there are wicked men who will exalt themselves and take on the term “father.” Don’t ever call anyone that.

And folks, you can guess right now, we have the Catholic church that does this, in absolute contradiction, they exhibit themselves as false teachers in this area, and many other areas, also. And “Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He Who is in heaven.” Never give credit to anyone apart from the Father for what He has done, spiritually speaking.

There are ungodly imposters seeking glory for themselves. Proud men crave recognition. Proud false teachers crave spiritual recognition from men and often it comes out in their titles. It comes out in their titles. False teachers seek the glory only due God. There is nothing we have ever done to bring about someone’s salvation. It is all from God. We praise Him, we thank Him, but it is not because of us. It is because of Him. We are privileged to be part of that. We are privileged to share the Gospel. We are privileged to share the saving Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, but God in His great mercy causes us to be born again. Don’t ever take credit for anything that God does, which is everything that is good. Now notice He continues with the third person of the Trinity and the role that we see now. He says in verse 10, “And do not be called leaders, for One is your Leader, that is Christ.”

Remember we saw in the end of chapter 22, that “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name. That it is a title. It comes from the word *Christos* which is a translation of the Hebrew word *Mashiach* where we get Messiah, or Anointed One. It spoke of the King who was anointed, and it came to speak of the King would sit on David’s throne forever and reign. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Christ. He is both Lord and Christ. He says now, this term here, He says, “Do not be called leaders...” This term “leader” is an interesting term, back in verse 10. It is only in this verse alone. And it speaks really of someone going before, leading, or guiding, really in the context of instruction. And it could speak even of a master or a teacher, but in that context it is someone who is leading, someone who is out in front of you. They are the head of you. Jesus is saying, “Don’t you dare take on a title with the underlying implication that usurps the authority of Christ as the Leader.” Christ is the leader! Christ is the leader. Never take on a title with the underlying implication that in some way you are the leader. Christ is the leader.

Folks, again we have spiritual leaders in churches. We see it clearly in Scripture. If you want to turn to Hebrews 13 for a second. Hebrews 13. There are leaders in the church, so we need to understand what He is saying here. Hebrews 13. Verse 7. <sup>7</sup> **Remember those who led you,** (and then he doesn’t even say “and.” He says here is how they led you.) **who spoke the word of God to you;** (They led you by giving you God’s Word. Godly leaders do not lead you around and rule over you. They lead you by giving you God’s Word.) **and considering the result of their conduct, imitate (what?) their faith. [Hebrews 13:7]** Their trust in Christ. Go up to verse 17 of Hebrews 13. This is speaking of godly leaders. <sup>17</sup> **Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. [Hebrews 13:17a]** They have a spiritual accountability to the Leader Himself. They are under-shepherds, watching for Him. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Not the pope, not the senior pastor, not the bishop, not the elders. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He is the head of the church.

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Let me share a few passages quickly. First Corinthians 11, turn with me. First Corinthians 11. Paul says in verse 3, <sup>3</sup>**But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, [1 Corinthians 11:3a]** He is the head. Ephesians 1:22, we will look at a few passages in Ephesians. Speaking of Christ, the Father has **put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, [Ephesians 1:22]** He is the head of the church, Ephesians 1:22. Speaking in the illustration of marriage in chapter 5, we see that, <sup>23</sup>**For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, [Ephesians 5:23a]** Ephesians 4:15, we see that Christ is the head. Colossians 1:18, turn to this one, Colossians 1:18. Christ is the leader. Don't ever be called leader. Don't ever take on an exalted title that in some way or shape or form within your abilities and talents and skills, *you* are leading the church. That is wicked. That is wicked thinking. It is prideful. Christ is the leader. Now He leads through His under-shepherds, who serve Him and trust in Him and abide in Him. Colossian 1:18, speaking of Christ, <sup>8</sup>**He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. [Colossians 1:18]**

Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 4:5 <sup>5</sup>**For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord,** (and he says) **and ourselves as your bond-servants... [2 Corinthians 4:5a]** We are servants, we are not the leader. Do not be called leaders in that sense. Do not ever allow someone to give you the glory that is only due Christ. "Do not be called leaders for One is your Leader, that is Christ." Jesus does not say, "Follow that guy!" He says, "Follow Me!" Folks, false teachers want you to follow them. We see this very clearly in Scripture. The Apostle Paul would tell the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, <sup>29</sup>**"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves (that is the elders) men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. [Acts 20:29-30]**

Godly leaders are under-shepherds who exalt Christ. Paul said, "We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching every man that we may present every man complete in Him." It is all about Christ. It is all about Christ. And if your leaders are not pointing you to Christ and total sufficiency in Christ, I would get away from there. Don't ever follow someone, don't ever call someone "leader" in that sense. "He is our leader," in that sense. No, Christ is the Leader and your leaders are servants who are pointing you to Christ the Leader. They lead you by speaking the Word of God to you. Only Christ is our authoritative Leader. Now again, we can give appreciation in whom Christ is working through. First Thessalonians 5, highly esteem them in love, because of their work, because of what Christ is doing through them. Folks, there are some godly pastors and teachers actually whom people have elevated. And they have elevated them as leaders, in the sense that is only due Christ. Maybe you have done that. Maybe you have got some radio preacher, whatever it is, whoever it is, you appreciate the Word of God through them; but you are subtly shifting the glory from God to them. Don't ever do that! And they should never allow you to do that. They should not be taking on the credit; it should all go to the living God. The disciples are being warned, not to be like the hypocrites who are going to hell, who love the credit. Who love it.

As a teacher, as a spiritual father in a sense, as a leader in the church, do you believe that you have done anything? That you receive any credit? If you do, there is a problem. You see, Jesus Christ receives all the glory. It is Him. There is one teacher, there is one Father, there is one Leader. It is all the Lord God. Don't

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take credit for things God is doing through you. His Spirit teaching through you, the Father brings about salvation through Christ, Christ alone is the leader. Don't forget this or you might become prideful, like the false teachers. Jesus is saying, "Don't be that way. Don't do it." And for leaders here, or those who would be leaders, don't do it. Don't do it.

And for those of you, in anything you do, do not take credit for anything at all. All the glory goes to Christ. I want to ask you, is there any area of your life, your job, the way you raise your family, anything that you have said, "Wow, I am doing a pretty good job. I am pretty good here."? No! Christ is the one who has done it through you. He gets all the glory. Is there any area that you need to confess? That you have fallen into the ways of those who are on their way to hell. We need to confess those things.

Ok so we see very clearly, we are not to be like those self-seeking, glory-loving, prideful leaders who usurp God's authority. Instead, godly leaders are to be humble servants. Look at our passage again. Verse 11, "But the greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." This is a difficult portion to translate. He says, "But in contrast, the greatest among you shall be your servant." And we have seen this before. And if I had just this verse here, it sounds like if you exalt yourself to be great, you are going to be a servant, you are going to the low end like that. But I don't think that is what it is saying. You could literally translate it this way, "But the greatest among or of you (that is the disciples) (plural), he (singular) shall be your all's servant." The greatest one is the servant of everybody. The word *diakonos*, servant, just means a simple lowly servant. We saw this same phraseology, turn back to Matthew 20, and this helps me interpret this also. Matthew 20. Jesus says in verse 25, <sup>25</sup> **But Jesus called them to Himself** (and this is His disciples), **and He said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.** (That's what they do, the great men of the world, they have this unbearing authority over them, they exercise that) <sup>26</sup> **It is not so among you. Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant,** <sup>27</sup> **and whoever wishes to be first shall be your (doulos) slave.** (And you think at that point maybe they are going to be the lowest if they try to be great; but I think He is saying, "Hey greatness comes through the context of obedient service," and here is the example.) <sup>28</sup> **Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. [Matthew 20:25-28]** Just as Christ, He is the greatest, and how did He come? As a servant. As a servant. Folks, don't exalt yourself and take credit for what God does. Serve the living God. Serve the living God. Humble yourself. You are a servant. You are a servant.

And notice He finishes with this maxim that addresses so many areas, I could share so many places in Scripture in different areas that this covers; but we will keep it to the context. Verse 12, "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled. And whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." Raise yourself up like the false teachers, you will be put down low. We saw back in chapter 11, "Capernaum, you will not be exalted to heaven will you? You are going to descend to hell." Because they had rejected Christ. You see, if you exalt yourself, if you give yourself credit, it is an evidence you do not know the living God. You are like those wicked false teachers, and you may be exalted for a time, but you will be de-elevated to the punishment that is due those who steal God's glory because they are not saved. But, whoever humbles

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himself, we saw Jesus say in chapter 18, whoever humbles himself like these little children, they become dependent. "I can't do it, it is all You!"

The first step of humbling is in salvation, "Lord God, I am a sinner. I cannot save myself, I have sinned against You. I believe that Your Son Jesus died for my sins. Lord, save me. I cannot save myself." Humble yourself. And then whoever humbles himself in the context of serving and walking with Him, he will be exalted. You see, the reality is the proud will be lowered, and the humbled will be exalted.

Is there anything in your life that you are exalting yourself in? Is there anything? It is sin. It is pride. Today we have seen very clearly the Lord Jesus command His servants not to be like the ungodly false teachers. They are not to, a direct prohibition. And leaders here should never be that way, and you should never exalt them in that way ever. That is really what we see from this passage. Don't ever exalt leaders, teachers, whatever it might be. Those who are spiritual fathers and mothers to you, don't ever exalt them. The glory goes to God. Don't be like those on their way to hell who love being called teacher. Only God's Spirit is the authoritative Teacher, only God the Father is our spiritual Father, we are all brothers, only Christ is the authoritative Leader. That's it.

Be a servant. Be a servant. Serve the Lord Jesus; He will exalt you at the proper time. Some of you need to be humbled. You need to humbly come before the Lord and admit your sin. You have exalted yourself and whatever it is. God is a gracious God. He will forgive you. He will forgive you.

We see in James 4, there should be a brokenness over that. God gives grace to the humble, but He is opposed to the proud. "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." Godly leaders are humble servants who give God all the glory. And that is the way we all should be.

## **Prayer**

Father, thank You for Your Word. It is just so clear. And I pray that we would not forget what we have heard from Your Word. I pray first of all for anyone here who is in their sin, that they would be humbled today rather than in eternity. That they would humble themselves before You, they would recognize their wickedness, and that You are a gracious God who sent Your Son Jesus to die for their sins. That He died, and He was put on the cross, and He died, and He rose from the dead. And that Your Word says, "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." May they from a genuine, broken, humbled heart call out for salvation. And Father, may those of us who are saved, may we examine our hearts. May we not take credit for anything, our entire life is Christ, Your Son. May there be nothing we take credit for. And if we have, may we repent, Lord God. May we as a body never elevate leaders, Lord God, or those who are ministering in such a way. May leaders never accept such elevation. May we serve You. May You receive all the glory. May we have the mindset Your Son clearly demonstrated when He took on human flesh and become obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. An obedient Servant. Father, thank You for Your Word. And thank You for this time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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