

## ***Part 2 - Traps, Good Answers and Solid Teaching***

Hello brothers, sisters and friends,

Okay, so continuing where we left off - Jesus continues teaching and the scribes and Pharisees keep trying to find any way possible to dismiss His strong convicting teaching. So, we'll pick up in Matthew 12:9.

Matthew 12:9-14 shows again, Jesus teaching God's Word, the healthy fear of the Lord, and righteousness, and doing it in such a way as to continue to provoke the hypocrites to feel strong conviction that causes them to again, reveal the evil of their hearts. I'll let you read the passage and then give 2 notes.

**"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there."** (Matthew 12:9-14)

A stunning sermon! :) A trick question from the religious hypocrites, allows Jesus to clearly expose how they had hardened their hearts in their rebellion (let's learn from their example not to do that) and then an amazing display of His authority - spoke and the arm was healed. Again, exposed their hypocrisy and then proved He was/is God in human flesh, for only God can heal with His spoken word - though He does, from time-to-time when it is right, still do so, today the number of actual healings that way are mostly a fraud. Just listening to the testimonies of those who weren't miraculously healed and the testimonies of those behind the scenes about a variety of hoaxes, shows that. Still, God does heal, but not like Benny Hinn (the fraud) or other charismatic lying leaders say for money and popularity. But, that is another topic, we can get to someday.

So, after Jesus spoke and truly healed this man, the religious leaders did exactly what you would expect them to, if they refused to repent: **"Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him."** (Matthew 12:14)

Jesus then healed many Jewish people who had diseases or ailments, after leaving the area - for it wasn't His time to die for our sins yet. Yet, He told them not to spread His name or the details, for He didn't want to be famous for the healings and miracles, but for the clear preaching of His Word. By His humility in this, Jesus fulfilled another prophecy in Isaiah 42:1-3, which is also quoted in this text: **"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel**

**nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.**" (Matthew 12:18-21) ~ That ending there is a precious promise to those of us who are not directly in the family of Israel ~ :).

So, someone then brought a blind and mute man who was demon-possessed to Jesus, and Jesus cast out the demon and the man's sight and speech returned to him - poor guy. But, even with this amazing miracle and the crowds rejoicing to see God's miraculous hand at work again, the religious teachers once again used the situation to attack Jesus. This time, however, they just tried to slander Him with the worst possible accusation - that Jesus operated, healed, and taught by the power and inspiration of the ruler of demons, Satan himself. Talk about adding to their judgment as they hardened their hearts in their rebellion - they certainly did that here! Rather than repent, they cold-heartedly falsely accused, trying anything to discredit Jesus.

Again, as always, Jesus' reply is astounding - only God could outdo them like that and show the evil in their hearts so clearly, and then pronounce the right judgment on them, like Jesus did. As you read this, I think you'll see why I say this. Here's the text:

**"And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."** (Matthew 12:23-28)

The people were starting to get it - Jesus is/was the Messiah, just not like they hoped. But, the hypocritical religious leaders rather than agree with the crowd, tried to slander Him to get the crowd to once again revere them and follow their man-made system and the rules they had added to look religious. Jesus, points out something profound - if Satan casts out Satan, then his kingdom is divided and will fall. We know Satan's rebellion will fall and that was one of the points Jesus made there. But, then Jesus goes on to state clearly that the hypocritical leaders did (apparently) cast out demons with Satan's help - a form of demonic deception to superficially prop up a leader (still goes on today too). Jesus shows they were the fakes and He was the Real. Then, Jesus tells them clearly that the Kingdom of God has come and He is here, in their presence, which proved once again that they were the rebels rebelling against and slandering God in human flesh, to protect their secret rebellious lifestyles, hypocrisy and greed for power and money.

But, Jesus doesn't stop there. He then goes on to explain a Biblical pattern for casting out demons and engaging in spiritual warfare, which you can read for yourself. And then, Jesus teaches a few very key truths:

**“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”** (Matthew 12:33-37)

A tree/person is known by his fruit/(pattern of actions and words). Someone who is trying to obey God will be growing in making their fruit good - continually learning to do what is right, saw what is right and with the right motive, while a rebellious heart will continue to devise evil ways of protecting their rebellion (good fruit/evil fruit). Then Jesus teaches us how to discern good trees from bad trees - whatever is in abundance in the heart will flow out of the mouth. If a person is trying to do what is right and please God, it will come out. If someone is trying to rebel, it will come out. If someone is trying to rebel and be secretive about it - it will come out. And, btw, when a 'pastor' or other religious leader tosses in a perverted joke or a joke about covetousness or about lying, etc - they just spoke out of the abundance of their heart. Watch them closely, for you might have just caught them acting religious and looking good on the outside when they have no care for God's Word on the inside. We have a lot of them in the country, and we need to work to identify and root them out.

Then Jesus states one of few points that sends chills through me just about every time I read it: **“every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it...”** Curious, how many words do you say a day? How many words do I say a day? How many of those words have no use whatsoever concerning eternity - either our spiritual growth, sharing the good news of the gospel, necessary duties of life, or discipling/training someone else? How much of that is just 'frivolous' talk? We may think it's frivolous here, but one day we will be very uncomfortable for our 'idle words' when we stand front-and-center before Him and have to give an explanation of why we said those useless words. That should not bring on us terror, but it sure should wake us up to become much more responsible with our words - me too. Remember, He doesn't want to condemn us, just to inspire and teach us to keep growing in patterns and a lifestyle, including actions, words, thoughts and motives that is only pleasing to Him, and not at enmity with Him. So, let's work to memorize that verse - it's Matthew 12:36 - and work to put it into practice.

By our words we are justified or condemned - what does this mean, simply put? If we are intentionally living in rebellion to things we know in God's Word, our words will typically indicate it. If we're genuinely trying to grow in obedience to the parts of the Word of God that we know, then our words will also show that. And, when we stand before Him, the things we truly did not know, He will hold us innocent on. It's just

the ones we do know that we won't be held innocent on, but today is another day to grow, yes? :)

So, back to Matthew 12, the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees must have been at their wit's end not knowing how to get rid of Jesus and the huge amount of conviction of being in the presence of God and Him clearly exposing their willful rebellion. So, guess what? They tried again, to trap Him, by 'politely' asking Him to show a sign/miracle that would once and for all 'prove' to them that He was the Messiah. Did I mention that it was a trap? Well, Jesus already knew what they were doing as responded accordingly, and you can read that for yourself in verses 38-45.

But, in conclusion - after an apparently typical day in the life of our Master and Savior, Jesus was then eating at someone's house and teaching, and His mother and brothers came to arrest Him to stop Him from preaching and teaching the Word of God to those who came eagerly to hear it. And this is how that played out:  
**“While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.’ But He answered and said to the one who told Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’”** (Matthew 12:46-50)

Jesus' message, I'm sure, got to His mother and taught her to learn obedience to God's Word, too, and not try to pull rank, because God shows no favoritism or partiality to anyone above another - as far as condoning one's sins and not another's. God will judge each of us by His standard with no variations, except that those who are bought with the precious blood of the Lamb of God will not be condemned with the world (to eternal punishment) but will judge them by their obedience to the parts of His Word that they knew and whether they obeyed or disobeyed it.

I pray this short overview is spiritually inspiring and beneficial to you! And, I look forward to hearing any feedback from those who read it.

Thanks for your prayers. And, till next time, let's keep spending quality time in His Word, everyday, and learning to obey what we read.

Your brother/friend and a growing servant/life-slave of Jesus, SH