

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: “Like a Little Sparrow before God” Luke 12

Scripture of Lesson: Luke’s Gospel 12: 1-12

1. Hypocrisy is like leaven

- A. In verse 12:1 Lord Jesus likened hypocrisy to leaven, which is used for baking bread. Leaven, typically yeast, has been used by bakers over the centuries to be mixed in dough of flour to cause fermentation and to make it rise.
- B. “Leaven” appears in NT in the following three contexts:
 - 1) In the parable of leaven [Matt 13: 33; Luke 13: 20-21] Lord Jesus likened the kingdom of God to leaven—meaning that a small beginning of God’s reign among the infantile church of Christ will permeate to the rest of the world and affect the whole.
 - 2) In the second use of leaven, it refers to the hypocritical teachings and attitude of the Pharisees and the lawyers of the Jewish nation of the time.
 - 3) In the third use of leaven in NT, apostle Paul strongly urges the Corinthian Christians to expel the licentious immoral person from the congregation by writing, *“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? [1 Corinthians 5:6]”* Here, he is referring to the influence of immoral element in a church which can spread and affect the whole congregation.
- C. In all of the above usages, the characteristic of leaven is noted – leaven affects the whole lump in its fermentation and transformative effect. But, why did the Lord liken hypocrisy to leaven? He did so because both of their properties are very similar:
 - 1) Hypocrisy, like leaven, affects the spirit of people so that a person of sound and honest principles can be transformed to possess duplicity – morally, spiritually, financially and often professionally.
 - 2) Hypocrisy, like leaven, spreads when certain conditions are right. Leaven needs a right level of moisture and warmth in a dough and its environment. Hypocrisy also requires uncontrolled greed for power, money and fame; evil encouragement from dark elements around us; and lack of moral and spiritual accountability.

2. We are little sparrows before God

- A. First of all, in verse 12:4, Lord Jesus called His disciples “my friends.” This is not just a passing form of addressing people. Verse 12:1 tells us that He specifically addressed these teachings to His disciples and now He calls them “my friends.”
- B. Lord Jesus taught His disciples, in verse 12: 4, not to fear those who can kill the body but have no more power beyond that. And He taught them to fear God, who “has power to cast into hell after killing.” What does this teach us? God has the power and He can use this power to kill the unbelieving sinners and then cast them into hell. Why should we fear such God? He is telling “His friends” that there will come a time when the true believing Christians will face persecution where some of them will meet deaths on account of their faith in their Lord. And He is encouraging “His friends” not to fear the persecutors because God will avenge them by killing and casting into hell all such persecutors and evil rulers. These unbelievers need to fear such God. But the true believers are like little sparrows before God whose lives are so precious that even the hairs on their heads are counted and remembered by God [v. 11:7]. Let us feel the encouragement from our Lord and live true to Him.

3. God’s help to His witnesses

- A. How forthright are we in witnessing our Lord to the unbelieving people around us? Lord Jesus encourages us to confess and witness Jesus Christ before people. If we deny Jesus, we will be denied before the angels of God [v. 11: 8]. We may be saved but will meet shame before the heavenly throng. How greatly will we be ashamed then!

B. Lord Jesus also warns the unbelievers for opposing the work of God's Holy Spirit, which would come after His ministry. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles we see the Holy Spirit taking charge of the work that was left behind by Jesus, the Son of Man, and helping His disciples to carry on this great work. Anyone opposing God's work will bring God's wrath upon himself. This is what happened to King Herod [Acts 12]:

So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied. [Acts 12: 21-24]

Discussion topics:

- 1. Have you felt like a little sparrow, so small, insignificant and powerless? How did God encourage you and made you feel precious in His sight?*
- 2. Share your experiences of witnessing Jesus with your neighbors and friends? How did God reward you for such acts?*