

## Pharisees have knowledge without obedience

**Zac Poonen:**

Jesus said, "The Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 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" (Matthew 23:2, 3).

In Matthew 23, Jesus exposes more characteristics of the Pharisees than we find in any other chapter in the Bible. Matthew 23 is a chapter that is the very opposite of 1 Corinthians 13. To be led by Law is the opposite of being led by Divine Love through the Holy Spirit. So if we want to be led out of Phariseeism and legalism into a life of Divine love, we must study Matthew 23 carefully.

The Pharisees sat in the chair of Moses, which meant that they had gone to Bible colleges and got their doctorate degrees and had a lot of accurate knowledge. Jesus even told His disciples to do all that the Pharisees taught. So what the Pharisees taught must have been right. But they did not obey what they knew to be right.

Knowledge is a very useful thing, but it can also be very dangerous. Knowledge coupled with obedience alone will bring spiritual life. Knowledge without obedience however brings spiritual death. It is better not to have any knowledge at all, than to have knowledge and not obey. Knowledge can be compared to the food we eat and the digestive process to obedience. It is when food is digested that it becomes part of our body. Rice and curry are turned into flesh and bones - a miracle that is no less than water being turned into wine. And our bodies perform this miracle every day!!

But if the food we eat is not digested, then that food can kill us - because undigested food will rot inside our stomachs and make us sick. Have you noticed when you vomit, that the food that comes out of your stomach stinks and tastes rotten? It may have been tasty chicken curry when you ate it. But it had a very different taste when you vomited it out. That's also what happens when we accumulate knowledge and do not obey. And that is why many Christians stink spiritually. The ones who stink the most are the ones who have the maximum amount of knowledge and the least amount of obedience. Pharisees are like that. But the sad part is that they themselves do not realize that they are stinking. A spiritual person however can smell that stink very quickly. A godly man can discern a Pharisee in five minutes of conversation with him. Their eyes are either haughty or full of adultery (Proverbs 6:17; 2 Peter 2:14). Many women who lived a flirtatious life in their unconverted days do not cleanse their spirit fully after their conversion. The result is that even 20 years after their conversion, their eyes are still flirtatious. I say to all young men: Stay clear of such sisters.