

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
QQQ. Handling Hypocritical Peer Pressure
(Luke 12:1-12)

I. Introduction

- A. After Jesus criticized the hypocritical religiosity of Israel's religious leaders in the Pharisees (Luke 11:37-38), He addressed the people who were intrigued by His teaching but who were also fearful of believing and acting upon Christ's words due to the peer pressure of the unbelieving, influential Pharisees (Luke 12:1-12).
- B. This address is valuable even for us believers, for we at times are called of God to live contrary to the errant views of influential leaders that we might obey Scripture. We thus view Luke 12:1-12 for our edification:

II. Handling Hypocritical Peer Pressure, Luke 12:1-12.

- A. Following Christ's critique of the Pharisees, multitudes of people had gathered around Jesus as they were fascinated with His teaching, so much so that the people were stepping on one another, Luke 12:1a.
- B. Jesus addressed the "disciples" in this throng, and the "term 'disciples' here did not refer to the Twelve but rather to the believers in this vast, seething multitude." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 312) "Christ viewed the multitudes as in a state of indecision. They were weighing the threats that the Pharisees might carry out against them if they left Pharisaism and identified with Christ. They were also considering the truth of Christ's words as authenticated by His works. Christ impressed on them the fact that their destiny depended on their decision and again exhorted them to put faith in Himself." (Ibid., p. 313)
- C. Christ thus told the multitude to beware of the corrupting "leaven" of hypocrisy in the Pharisees, Luke 12:1b.
- D. His explanation of this warning followed in Luke 12:2-12 (as follows):
 - 1. First, Jesus said that there is nothing that is hypocritically covered that will not eventually be exposed and there was nothing that was hypocritically hidden that would not eventually be revealed, Luke 12:2. Indeed, whatever one had spoken in darkness would be heard in the light, and that which was spoken in the ear in indoor closets would be proclaimed on the housetops, Luke 12:3. Thus, to follow the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to keep the peace with them would bring shame upon oneself in the end!
 - 2. Second, Jesus told the crowd that they should not fear the Pharisees who might kill the body, but after that have no power to do anyone more harm, Luke 12:4. Rather, they should fear God Who after He had killed the body had the power to cast one's soul into hell, Luke 12:5. Jesus thus revealed the importance of choosing to believe in Christ for eternal life and salvation versus not believing in Him to keep peace with the Pharisees only to end up in eternal condemnation in hell.
 - 3. Third, Christ encouraged the people to trust in Him regardless of the influence of the Pharisees to do the opposite, for trusting in Christ would put them under God's care, Luke 12:6-7:
 - a. Jesus' illustration of the sparrows was based on the fact that sparrows "were so cheap that, though they sold two for a cent (Matt. 10:29), a fifth one was thrown in for the price of four. Yet the infinite God is concerned for each one." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Luke 12:6)
 - b. Since every single sparrow is remembered by God, certainly He would care for believers in Christ.
 - c. Jesus added that even the very hairs of the head of a believer are all numbered, so believers should not fear what man might do to them, for they were of more value than many sparrows, Luke 12:6-7.
 - 4. Fourth, if the people confessed their faith in Christ before others, including before the Pharisees, Christ would confess them before the angels of God in heaven, but if they denied Christ before men, they would be denied before the angels of God, Luke 12:8-9. In other words, the public assertion of the people regarding Christ would reflect God's public assertion of them before the heavenly angels!
 - 5. Fifth, though speaking a word against Jesus' humanity would be forgiven, one who slandered the Holy Spirit by Whom Christ performed His authenticating miracles would not be forgiven, Luke 12:10. It was thus important not to deny the evidence of Christ's authenticating miraculous works by the Holy Spirit!
 - 6. Sixth, when those who confessed Christ might be brought before the authorities, the Holy Spirit would equip them to say what they should say, so believers were not to fear facing formidable foes, Lk. 12:11-12.

Lesson: *In view of our ultimate accountability to God in the end and due to His current help if we stand for the truth, it is always better to avoid even strong peer pressure of hypocritical religiosity and openly stand for the truth.*

Application: *May we avoid yielding to the hypocritical religiosity of even formidable religious foes in favor of upholding the truth that we might enjoy God's current help and His ultimate vindication versus His discipline!*