

# RESISTING CONFESS

mark 12

**Mark 12.1-44 - Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.**

**“Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.**

**Have you not even read this Scripture:**

**‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.**

**This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’ ?”**

**And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.**

**Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?**

**Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?”**

**But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it. ”**

**So they brought it.**

**And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”**

**And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”**

**And they marveled at Him.**

**Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”**

**Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ ? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”**

**Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”**

**Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

**So the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”**

**Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”**

**But after that no one dared question Him.**

**Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?**

**For David himself said by the Holy Spirit:**

**‘The Lord said to my Lord,**

**“Sit at My right hand,**

**Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’**

**Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’ ; how is He then his Son?”**

**And the common people heard Him gladly.**

**Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”**

**Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”**

It’s interesting to watch Jesus interact with the group of religious leaders that we commonly refer to as the Pharisees. Here we see that there were actually 3 or 4 different groups that always hung around hassling the Lord. There were the Scribes, who were seen as experts in God’s Word. There were the Pharisees, who were seen as incredibly pious and righteous. And then there were the Sadducees, who were a wealthy, ruling class and were perceived as blessed and successful in material things.

And here we have a whole chapter of these guys coming and barraging Jesus with question after question about all sorts of topics. Now, because of the text, we know that the real reason they were doing this was to try to trap Jesus and get Him to say something unlawful or anti-Roman or blasphemous so they could move forward with their plan to murder Him.

But as we look at this chapter devotionally we can see that the parable and their discussions reveal to us our own hearts. Because, even though we may not *reject* Jesus like the Pharisees did, I think it's safe to say we each have the tendency to *resist* Jesus when He comes to change or correct us. That's the sin nature. The sin nature is, by definition, at odds with Christ's calling. And our sin nature, our enemy the Devil and the world around us, though conquered by the power of the resurrection, still have opportunity to get us off track, distanced from God and resisting His power and His plan for our lives.

We get this warning over and over again throughout the Bible. Whether it's the example of Solomon or the exhortation of the Epistles or the out-and-out, called on the rug letter to the Church at Ephesus, we as God's people need to be awake to the fact that there is a resistance within us. There is a desire to question God and to question what He has commanded. That was the original problem in the Garden of Eden and it is a problem we've all inherited.

But what we see here in this chapter is Jesus reaching out to even these Pharisees. Even these terrible, hypocritical, white-washed tombs. Jesus sits them down and says, "Here's what's going on: You're supposed to be God's people, but you don't understand God's word. You're resisting the Kingdom. And, therefore, your lives are going to be wasted."

Now, again, I'm not suggesting that we are Pharisees. But, what I am suggesting is that the same motivation can lurk in our hearts and we can watch for it by understanding God's word and doing what God asks us to do.

The great mistake that these guys made was described by Jesus in verse 24:

**Mark 12.24 - Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"**

This was an incredible thing to say to these guys. According to everyone around them, all they did was study the Scriptures. They knew their way around the Scriptures. Which is, I think, a great way to think about how they approached God's word. Because you see here they keep coming to Jesus and sort of asking what the minimum requirement is for them to be rewarded by God. What's the minimum obligation? What about this situation over here or that loop-hole over there? They wanted to keep asking Him all these hypothetical stuff because what they *didn't* want to do was deal with their own hypocrisy and their own need to repent. And, I know I certainly have this sort of mindset sometimes. The Lord shows up and has some change or correction for me, and all of a sudden I'm really busy with other stuff. Other spiritual things that I'm doing really well. Or I start reasoning my way out of what God is asking me to do or to change. Or I start trying to let God know about what this OTHER guy did over here and shouldn't He be spending time rebuking him? And those things are simply a resistance against the Lord so that we can avoid the submission we're called to.

You see it happening here. Jesus says to these guys, “I’m your Savior and you need to repent.” And all of a sudden they need to talk to Him about marriage in heaven and taxation and how to rank the commandments of God and all these phony things that they didn’t care about.

And that’s the moment where we find out how well we know the Scriptures and the power of God. When the Lord comes to us and says, ‘Repent. Surrender this issue or this decision or this control to Me. Give it to Me.’ That’s when we discover whether we know the God of the Scriptures and His power in our lives.

Because in God’s word we see an incredible amount of provision. Even in just this chapter we can learn a lot about what God has done for us. We learn that He’s prepared a life for us to live. A little garden with vines to bear fruit and hedges to protect us and towers to watch over us. He’s provided a work for us to do so that we can be a part of His forever Kingdom. He’s provided heaven for us, where we will be glorified and in His presence. He’s given us His word so that we might know who He is and prophecy so that we can trust what He says. He’s given us His power so that we can navigate through life pleasing Him.

And to all of that, all the revelation of who God is what He’s done, all these so-called religious leaders could ask was, “What’s the minimum? What do I really have to do so that God is forced to bless me and honor me? How can I be magnified for what I’m already doing?”

Of course, the answer Jesus gave them was, “You have to give *all* to me.” That’s what God is looking for. Not a self-serving faith. Not a religion that props people up over others. He’s looking for everything. And what He said to these guys was, “If you knew Me, if you understood what I’ve done for you, you’d love Me. You would *give* yourselves to Me like the widow gave all that she had.” Because the widow understood what God had provided her. She may not have been successful materially like the Sadducees, but she knew God and knew His power and was able to live out the calling that Christ places on our lives.

And what we need to understand is that there is a resistance in our hearts. There is a nagging suspicion that God doesn’t know what He’s talking about. Or, worse, there is a persistent desire to set ourselves up as god over our own lives. We think we can be middle management. We can call our own shots, but still please the Lord through some token habit or some religious status.

And this whole chapter reveals to us that if we know God, if we know His Word, not just how to find loopholes for carrying packages on the Sabbath, but if we know God, then we will understand all that He has provided. And we will understand the power that He’s made available to us. And we will understand how possible it is for us to walk with Him. To actually give ourselves over to Him. To love like He loves and sacrifice like He sacrificed. We may not do it perfectly, but we can do it effectively. But to discover this kind of satisfaction in Jesus, the kind of confidence that makes it possible for a person to put her last 2 pennies into the collection plate, we have to put down the resistance in our hearts. We have to put down the rebellion that’s trying to knock us off the tracks. We have to stop trying to rationalize our way out of crucifying self, sacrificing our lives and loving our neighbors. We have to stop. And this resistance of God isn’t always an active denial of what God has said. Sometimes it’s much more subtle than that. If we look within our hearts and see that we’re afraid to interact with God, if we’re afraid He’s going to change something or prune back some branch of our lives, if

we're content to just do the minimum - to be minor league disciples, then we can be sure that the resistance has gained ground in our hearts.

The Pharisees and Scribes and Sadducees, they were God's people. They were Jews with all the provision and promise and potential that God offered. But, over time they had decided to place self in the role of god. They resisted the correction and transformation that God wanted to do. And the result was what we see here. They were a joke. They were the opposite of what God had called them to be. And their lives were wasted.

Let's not become Pharisees. Let's not become Solomon. Let's not become Ephesus. Let's put down the resistance and receive the life God has made for us. We can't do it by listing out a hierarchy of habits. We do it by knowing God, by knowing His word and by believing in the power that He has made available to us today.