

### Luke 12:1-12

Christian History magazine tells a number of stories that reveal St. Francis of Assisi's intense and complex personality. I was particularly struck with how he dealt with temptation and repentance.

Once he got sick after eating too much chicken. After regaining his strength of body, he entered the city of Assisi. When he had come to the city gate, he commanded a brother with him to tie a rope about his neck and to drag him like a robber through the entire city and to shout in the voice of a herald, saying, "Behold the glutton who has grown fat on the meat of chickens, which he ate without you knowing about it."

That is a tough repentance! Aren't you glad we don't encourage that approach the weekend after Thanksgiving? If you think that was difficult, wait until you see how he dealt with his own sin and temptation.

"Francis severely disciplined himself against temptations of the flesh. In winter, he would sometimes hurl himself into a ditch full of ice and remain there until every vestige of sinful temptation had departed. To avoid lust, he avoided talking with women. When he was required to speak with one, he fixed his gaze on the ground or sky."—Christian History

If we practiced this mode of repentance or prevention of sin, say in Bellingham Bay in the winter, we might have a very small church. I am not advocating any of these practices as we look at Luke 12:1-2, but the words of Jesus can be very sobering.

---

One of the biggest lies about sin is that we think we can conceal it; that we will be smart enough to cover our "sin tracks." In Christ's day, this thinking and strategy was the norm for the religious leaders.

Like the Pharisees, some today believe the best way to conceal their private sins is with public religion—exterior acts that give the impression that they must be very holy and

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

righteous. For others, it is a matter of balance; if a person has more good than bad deeds, God will surely overlook the bad because He is so impressed with the good.

Jesus addresses this misconception and gives wonderful insight and promises to

1. the disciple who is authentic and confessional and desires a personal spiritual renewal—a chalk revival. (Be prepared for God's loving conviction and affirmation!)
2. the one practicing exterior religion
3. the one trying to balance good with evil. Be prepared to privately repent, or face a public revelation of all your sins.

### The Setting of Luke 12:1-12 The Atmosphere: Anticipation

*v. 1a—Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another...* **The Audience: Crowds and Disciples**

*v. 1b—Jesus began to speak first to his disciples...* **The Advice: a Warning**

*v. 1c—...saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."*

The warning concerns the effects of the Pharisees, of "yeast." We all know about yeast and its effect; a small amount works itself quietly and subtly into the whole batch of dough. When I was in a boys home economics class, we used to put yeast in another guy's baking when he wasn't looking. We saw the strangest and largest things come out of those ovens.

As we know, hypocrisy means "to mask," as an actor would do in playing a part, acting to be seen of men (John 5:45; 12:42-43; Matt. 6:1-5,16). It speaks of that which is not real, i.e., phony. When the yeast of hypocrisy is present, it has the same effect. It takes only a little hypocrisy in a person or a church to spread, until a relationship with God is phony—1 Cor. 5:6.

The impact of the yeast of hypocrisy especially affects the religious, because there is a difference between exterior religion and Christianity. The essence of Christianity is

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

unmasked faith. A genuine relationship with Jesus changes the heart and is focused on pleasing God because we love Him.

Religion, on the other hand, is focused on the rules, with no heart, substance or compassion. It is only a show. It has no devotion to God, only a love for the praises of men. It has no grace, only legalism.

What happens if we don't guard ourselves from the yeast? We, like the Pharisees, can focus on exterior actions and neglect our hearts. Tragically, the result of wearing the hypocrisy mask is, we will become deceitful, discouraged, and even angry, while our outward appearances are kept up. Tragically, the hypocrisy mask becomes the norm for all who follow. Some will give up because they cannot obey or keep the exterior rules. Others will begin to live a secret life of sin and attempt to keep up the facade/ "keep on the mask." (Illustrations abound in legalistic churches.) Because of this problem, many watching from outside the church have rejected a fake Christianity and not the real thing. Having tried to follow the "rules", they have concluded they couldn't do it!

Will the secret lives of the "religious" go undetected forever? No! Luke 12:2-3 reveals that our secrets will be exposed eventually.

### The Exposure of Secrecy—vv. 2-3

*There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 3] What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.* Jesus makes it abundantly clear that **inevitably and**

**eventually, our actions/deeds/words will be exposed**

. Everything will be known! Something hidden, done, or said in secret places with few or no witnesses (e.g., secrets whispered, deeds done, thoughts meditated upon), it

**will be**

made known; it is a law! We all need to hear this!

This exposure, by the way, will reveal both good and bad.

- **The sinner's life will be exposed:**

**Sins will be exposed in this life.** Scriptural illustrations include the following:

Matt. 23:1-32 is a scathing rebuke and exposure of the secret life of the Pharisees, almost painful to read. First Corinthians 14:23-25 tells us there are occasions when prophecy will reveal the heart of the sinner. Acts 5:1-11 is a well-known passage about the exposure of Ananias and Sapphira's inner motives. Their sin was so grievous to the Holy Spirit, they died because of it.

John 8:1-11 tells the story of the woman caught in adultery, whose sin was revealed. Less obvious is that Jesus apparently revealed the sins of the people who wanted to stone her, either through the statement, "*You who are without sin cast the first stone,*" or when He wrote in the sand (some believe Jesus wrote the sins of the oldest to the youngest there).

How would we like to be on a beach with Jesus and have Him pick up a stick and begin to write our secret sins and thoughts? That certainly would make us less judgmental, wouldn't it?

**In the life to come, however, all will be seen.** Verses 2-3 make it clear that everything concealed will be disclosed, everything hidden will be made known... "what you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered will be proclaimed."

Other passages show how our sins will be revealed some day—Matt. 23:33; 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15.

*11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what*

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- **The saint's life will also be examined.**

All good words/deeds will be reported in eternity—2 Cor. 5:6-10; Matt. 25:31-40; 1 Cor. 3:10-15. But not all examination will take place in eternity. Some of the good will be reported —2 Cor. 8:1-5; 1 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Thess. 1:3-4.

On the flip side, some of the sins of the saints will be reported now, too—1 Cor. 5:1; 11:27-30; Gal. 2:11-14; 6:1-2.

### Questions:

- Christian, are you prepared to have your life be an open book?
- Are you prepared to give an account to God for all your deeds right now?
- Are you prepared to have those you respect and love the most hear and see your secret life?
- What is going on in your life that you would be horrified to have proclaimed in the media?

These are tough questions, but they must be answered. So what will assure us that our examination/exposure will be favorable? **The only complete solution for sin is Christ's blood** —

Eph. 1:7—*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph. 2:13—*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

Heb. 9:14—*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,*

[Or from useless rituals]

*so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

*1 Pet. 1:17-21—Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

The applied blood of Christ brings cleansing and forgetfulness.

*1 John 1:5-9—This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*Hebrews 10:17—Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.*

*Hebrews 8:12—"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*  
[Jer. 31:31-34]

When it comes to our **forgiven sins**, God is absentminded. When it comes to our **former sins**,

we are purified and cleansed.

*Why*

pull the weight of secret sin when your sin can be covered and forgotten, and you can be free from it?

So why don't we receive this cleansing and walk in the light? We have not guarded against the yeast of sin/hypocrisy. We fear the rejection of men more than we fear God, and we don't know who God is. We tend to want to please men over God.

The next few verses give us some important insight about:

## The Enlightenment of our Fear—vv. 4-5

*—I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. **Yes, I tell you, fear him...***

He's telling us we should *not* fear killers in this life—those who might annihilate us through war, violent crime, or persecution. These types of killers can affect only the body. Obviously we avoid and flee from dangerous people, but the worst thing anyone might do to us is not to kill our body. The killer is limited.

v. 4b—*do not be afraid of those who kill the body and **after** that can do no more.*

**"Until God is through with you, you are bulletproof and lightning-proof"—Bill Valley, missionary to Mexico.**

There is someone we should fear, however.

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

v. 5—*But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. **Yes, I tell you, fear him...***

We are to fear the One who can kill the body, and can throw us into hell, too. The Bible makes it clear that God doesn't want this to happen, but because of their choices, some will be thrown into hell! That is not easy to say, but listen to and meditate on these Scriptures:

2 Pet. 3:9—*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

Rev. 20:11-15—*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Matt. 25:44-46—*"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."*

What does it mean to fear God? Does He really want us to cower in His presence and walk around fearing that He might throw us into hell? No. The fear of God is defined differently. It means to have reverential awe, a complete submission to His rulership and control (Ps. 33:8; Prov. 1:7; 15:16; 14:27; 23:17; Rev. 15:4). It means to have a deep and healthy respect for His character and holiness. (See ["The Fear of the Lord"](#) by Bob Stone.)

The words "fear" or "awe" could make God sound unapproachable, but He isn't! We should f

ear  
, but why should we not be  
afraid  
?

- **Our God will not forget us.** v. 6—*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.*
- **Our God knows everything about us.** v. 7a—*Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered*

For a more complete understanding, study Psalm 139:1-18. This knowledge of God includes more than how we are made, our gifts, talents, capacity, and propensities.

- **Our God also knows our value.** v. 7b—*"Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."*

- **But the best reason of all for not being frightened of God is He loves us**—John 3:16.

## The Eternal Consequences of Our Fear and Testimony—vv. 8-12

Both negative and positive promises/consequences accompany our fear of God and testimony.

*"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9 But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."* **If we acknowledge Him (i.e., fear Him more than man), He will acknowledge us** —v. 8. The Son of Man (the name Jesus used of

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

Himself) will acknowledge us before the angels of God—in other words, before God's throne.) *Can you imagine what this will be like, to have Jesus acknowledge/introduce/affirm us in the presence of God and His angels?*

Another promise/consequence is:

**If we disown Him, He will disown us.** The result is obvious. v. 9—*But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.*

**If we speak against the Son of God, and repent, we will be forgiven.** v. 10a—*And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven*

...  
(See also Mark 3:28; I John 1:9.) It is not stated in this passage that forgiveness or confession is sought, but that is obviously prerequisite to the forgiveness promised here.

One of the most controversial passages in Scripture is the next verse. In context, however, we can see it as one of the negative consequences of a lack of fear of God.

**If we blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, we will not be forgiven.** What does that mean? v. 10b—*but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.*  
(I encourage you to look at Mark 3:20-30 for background.)

If any passage of Scripture should shake up a sinner/unbeliever, it is this one. If you are a believer, wanting to follow God, this is not addressed to you; you won't commit this sin!

So, what exactly does this verse mean? Let's try to clear up some of the confusion and misapplication.

There is no sin that cannot be forgiven, if men repent and turn in faith to Christ. (That

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

includes blasphemy). But it is possible to sin so that the conscience becomes seared "as with a hot iron"—1 Timothy 4:2. At that point, a person will lose all desire to repent and will not be forgiven **because they don't want to be forgiven**—John 3:19; 1 Tim. 4:2.

How would an unbeliever know if he has committed this sin that cannot be forgiven? If someone attributes the works of Jesus to Satan, it shows he is close to this sin.

Mark 3:29-30—*"But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."* 30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

Understand, this unforgiven sin is the result of continual rejection of Jesus, to the point of no return. Continual rejection of the Holy Spirit's testimony about Jesus leaves a person totally in sin, for which there is no forgiveness. For the Pharisees it was progressive, and included these steps:

- a denial of Christ's authority
- a rejection of the Good News
- an elevation of the oral law over the needs of people
- a conspiracy to destroy Jesus
- their accusation that Jesus was a son of Satan
- finally, the complete and total rejection of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

There is no forgiveness for this continual/perpetual rejection.

**If you are persecuted, don't worry about what you will say—the Holy Spirit will teach you.**

vv. 11-12—*When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

This is a wonderful promise: if we risk acknowledging the Lord to someone and are persecuted for it, or brought to trial for our faith, we shouldn't worry! The Holy Spirit will whisper in our ear what we should say in those moments. One of the major reasons people refuse to witness or even to live the Christian life is because they are afraid of what others might say or what they will say to others. His promise is, if we acknowledge and do not deny Him, the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say.

---

So what is your worst fear about serving Jesus? The Lord's promises should far outweigh your fears. On the other hand, if you live a public life of religion, but a private life of sin, know it will be exposed. God calls us to repent of sin—both public and private. This will begin a revitalization of your spiritual life that you desperately need, even though you may not know it now!

1. When you were growing up at home, what did you dread that your parents or your church would find out you were doing? (Use discretion in sharing.) In general, what is it that is enjoyable about doing something secret/hidden?

2. Describe what it will be like for a nonbeliever to have his sins revealed in this life and in eternity.

- Use the following verses to describe specifically what might happen—Matt. 23:1-33; 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 14:23-25; Acts 5:1-11; John 8:1-11; Rev. 20:11-15.

- Review the alternative—2 Cor. 5:6-10; Matt. 25:31-40; 1 Cor. 3:10-15—and discuss with another person or a group what will mean the most to you. Why is Christ's blood the necessary ingredient (Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Heb. 8:12; 9:14-15; 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:17-21; 1 John 1:5-9)?

- In the light of the above verses and verses 4-12, why is it that a person who is fully informed will refuse to follow Christ?

- Do you know someone who may have committed v. 10b? Without names, describe him/her. Does he/she want to repent?

- Have you ever experienced something like verses 11-12? Share it, pray about it.

## Private Repentance or Public Revelation—a study of Luke 12:1-12

Written by Bob Stone

---

- As you look again at Luke 12:1-12, what verses are you thankful for? Why?