

Luke 20:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

Analysis

Beware of the scribes (Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων, Prosechete apo tōn grammateōn)—Prosechō (to watch out, pay attention, guard against) in present imperative commands continuous vigilance. The preposition apo (from, away from) suggests keeping distance. Scribes were Scripture experts, Torah copyists, legal interpreters—the most educated, respected religious professionals. Yet Jesus warns against them, demonstrating that theological education without heart transformation produces dangerous religion.

Which desire to walk in long robes (τῶν θελόντων περιπατεῖν ἐν στολαῖς, tōn thelontōn peripatein en stolais)—Thelō (to desire, wish) reveals motivation: they want recognition. Stolai (long robes) were distinctive garments signaling religious status. Their peripateo (walking, conduct) is literally about robes but metaphorically about conspicuous piety. **And love greetings in the markets** (καὶ φιλούντων ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς, kai philountōn aspasmous en tais agorais)—Phileō (to love) shows affection for public aspasmous (salutations) that acknowledged status. Religion becomes performance for human applause rather than service to God.

Historical Context

Scribes wore distinctive fringed robes (cf. Numbers 15:38-39) that set them apart visually. Marketplace greetings included titles like 'Rabbi,' 'Master,' or 'Father'—

Jesus would later tell disciples not to seek such titles (Matthew 23:7-10). The scribes' religious identity was externalized, validated by visible symbols and public deference.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do religious titles, robes, or symbols risk becoming ends in themselves rather than markers of genuine godliness?
2. What modern equivalents exist to 'long robes' and 'marketplace greetings'—ways religious people seek visible status?
3. How can you examine your own motives: Do you serve for God's approval or human recognition?

Interlinear Text

Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τοῖς γραμματέων τοῖς θελόντων
Beware of which the scribes which desire
G4337 G575 G3588 G1122 G3588 G2309

περιπατεῖν ἐν στολαῖς καὶ φιλούντων ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν
to walk at long robes and love greetings at
G4043 G1722 G4749 G2532 G5368 G783 G1722

τοῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν τοῖς συναγωγαῖς
which the markets and the highest seats at which the synagogues
G3588 G58 G2532 G4410 G1722 G3588 G4864

καὶ πρωτοκλισίας ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις
and the chief rooms at which feasts
G2532 G4411 G1722 G3588 G1173

Additional Cross-References

Luke 11:43 (Love): Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

Luke 14:7 (Parallel theme): And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

Matthew 16:6 (Parallel theme): Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Luke 12:1 (Parallel theme): In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Proverbs 29:23 (Parallel theme): A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Romans 12:10 (Love): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

2 Timothy 4:15 (Parallel theme): Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

3 John 1:9 (Love): I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

Mark 8:15 (Parallel theme): And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.
