

Wayfarers Weekly

The Development of the Pharisees & Sadducees

Part 4 of 4: When Pharisaism is in Christ's Church

As consumers who appreciate and depend upon the truthful representation of the quality of products, false advertisement is reprehensible to us. Often, people are duped by infomercials because the desired product is misrepresented in its quality. Ostensibly, hypocrisy falls right in line with misrepresentation and false advertisement of self and Christ. Jesus noted of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:27-28, "For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

The Greek term *hypokrites* (hypocrite) is a fascinating word Jesus used to reveal the deplorable character of a

supposedly pious people who were inconsistent in their own religion, yet criticized the religiosity of others. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words states that *hypokrites* "primarily denotes, 'one who answers'; then, 'a stage-actor'; it was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word became used metaphorically of 'a dissembler, a hypocrite.'"

"Pharisaism" has since gained a negative connotation. Jesus gave this warning, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do." (Matt 23:2-3)

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That warning applies just as much today as it did then. Pharisaism seems to work its way into the church making havoc of it as a whole as well as corrupting individual lives. The problem is that it causes people to think that they are religious before God, but really are blinded by their ways unable to see the error. Hypocrisy misleads people.

In Matthew 6:2, 5 Jesus clearly warns people not to be like the Pharisees (hypocrites). The motives of the Pharisees mentioned here were to seek the praise of men. This Pharisaical attitude, when it exists within the church takes away from the concern to worship God in spirit

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Striving to serve the Lord in all lowliness of spirit.

(Ephesians 4:1, 2).

Motivating each other for love and good works.

(Hebrews 10:24, 25)

and in truth. If this attitude persists there are likely to be changes that occur in the teaching and preaching if it is the teacher and preacher who have this attitude. Sometimes men who seek the praise of others get what they are looking for. Because of this people begin to place too much of their trust in a certain preacher or teacher which takes them away from their trust in and dependence upon God. The praise of men is nothing more than a matter of pride and personal exaltation. A church that exists on pride is not a church that will continue to exist.

Pharisaism will bring about in an individual a heart that does not match the outward appearance. We call this double-standard living. And yet sadly there are so-called Christians who put on the show and “play church,” as it were, just to appease the people and their own conscience. The damage that takes place is more within the individual’s lukewarm relationship with God. People can see right through insincerity. The effects that one person’s insincerity can have upon another’s life can be spiritually damaging. Some Christians who see the insincerity in fellow disciples have walked away from Christ thinking that the church is completely full of hypocrites. For the non-Christian, Christ’s church is issued a label as being hypocritical, all because of the insincere life that a single Christian chooses to lead. How can souls be won by those who have a double-standard lifestyle? Pharisaism demands of others what one is not willing to demand of self.

In Luke 18:9 Jesus directs a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. He was speaking of the Pharisees and that became quite evident in parable. Self-trust causes Christians to take on a “holier-than-thou” attitude. The Pharisees despised sinners and tax collectors, but Jesus was aware of the value of a soul. If the church carries with it an “I’m-better-than-you” attitude despising the “sinner,” then the church has lost sight of God’s plan of salvation and will only be selective of the souls it reaches. This same attitude causes members to be quick to judge each other. Instead of correcting others in a loving and gentle manner, they are the one’s who “cast the first stone” and give rise to hatred instead of making for peace. To address this self-righteous, condemning attitude the Pharisees had toward the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” (John 8:7) Pharisaism in this way will keep a church from looking at itself to determine with honesty any problems that may exist, and instead will become as judges of others without first considering itself.

Pharisaism not only shows hypocrisy, it shows uneven balance of priorities and emphasis. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for neglecting the weightier matters of the law by focusing on their tithing so much that they forgot about justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23) This form of Pharisaism within the church will cause the minor things to become

important and the major things to become unimportant.

Another aspect of Pharisaism places emphasis upon tradition. For the Pharisees it was just as binding as law. The problem is it was not law, and as Jesus exclaimed, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?” (Matt 15:3) Tradition, in and of itself is not wrong as long as it does not conflict with the commandments of God. But even in the church the attitude toward tradition at times has been dogmatic and forced upon others as if it were law. A traditional mindset can be dangerous, causing narrow-mindedness and dogmatism to prevail.

Pharisaism within the church is like a weed in a garden, it will choke the church of its growth and will make for discord and possibly even division. Hatred begins to build when brethren have a “holier-than-thou” attitude and suppose in their own minds they are superior to others.

The eventual result of the Pharisees’ own religious zeal for piety before God turned to a zeal for piety before men. Although they originally sought to be as precise and exact in their teaching and understanding of God’s law they lost their focus of the weightier matters of the law and emphasized their traditions as if they were God’s law when in reality they were taking people away from keeping the commandments of God.

When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as in the U.S., with

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the beautiful baby on the label. Later they learned that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the label to depict the contents of the container, because many Africans cannot read. Are the contents of our lives consistent with the label (Christ)? Hypocrisy exists if we desire to have a great image, such as godliness, but are not willing to make the sacrifices and do the work to conform our lives to the image we claim to portray. Image is important to uphold, especially when that image is Christ, but not at the cost of pretense.

-Danny Matchniff

ADVERSITY TRAINING

The apostle Peter tells us the sobering truth in I Peter 1:7 that the Christian faith will be “tested by fire” in order that it might be made genuine. Examples abound in the Scriptures as to the truthfulness of this claim.

Consider David, the man “after God’s own heart.” His life was full of adversity. As a lowly shepherd he battled “a lion and a bear” (I Sam. 17:34-37). And for the sake of Israel he was willing to fight and overcome the giant Goliath (I Sam. 17:45-51). He knew what it was like to be ignored (I Sam. 16:11), criticized (I Sam. 17:40-51), and underestimated (I Sam. 17:33, 43-44). He was also hated and pursued by King Saul who sought to take his life (I Sam. 18:8-12; 19:9-10). Why so? Because he was God’s choice to replace King Saul (the people’s choice).

But before God made him a king, he trained him through adversity. From the lonely hills of Judea as a shepherd through a number of years of his life, God made him walk and live through hard times to purify his faith. Through the many sessions of adversity training, he learned about God’s power, provision, and providence. Are we willing to allow our faith to be “tested by fire” so that God can use us for His glory, honor, and power?

-Bill Bryant.

WORD SEARCH: SERMON ON THE MOUNT



- ADULTERY
- ALMS
- BEAM
- BEATITUDES
- BLESSED
- BRETHREN
- CANDLE
- CHILDREN OF GOD
- CORRUPT
- DISCIPLES
- FALSE PROPHETS
- FASTING
- FOOTSTOOL
- HUNGER
- HYPOCRITES
- JUDGEMENT
- KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
- LIGHT
- LORD'S PRAYER
- LOVE
- MAMMON
- MERCIFUL
- MOUNTAIN
- MULTITUDES
- NEIGHBOUR
- PEACEMAKERS
- PLUCK
- PRAYER
- RACA
- RIGHTEOUSNESS
- SALT
- SAND
- SEEK
- TEMPTATION
- TREASURES
- TRESPASSES
- TWAIN

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Visitors Last Week

Brian joined our worship again on Sunday. He recently took a job with the U.S. Forrest Service and is looking for a place to worship. This is his third time worshipping with us.

Darion Gibbs came with Chris & Bobby. She is in high school and very active in extra-curricular activities.

Marilyn Shaffer is here while Mark & Dorinda are in Hawaii. She worships with the Redding Church of Christ.

Jim & Mavrey Uptegrove were here visiting family. They worship with the Mack Road Church of Christ in the Sacramento area.

Out of Town

Larry Rawlins is preaching in Chester today.

Mark & Dorinda Shaffer are on vacation in Hawaii and should return home Wednesday or Thursday.

Sick/In Need of Prayers

Gladys suffered a fractured vertebrae in a recent fall which cancelled her planned trip to Washington. She is home recovering.

Dee Darden (former member) was transported to Reno for surgical removal of a blood clot in her arm. She'll be home in 2 - 3 days.

Thelma continues to recover from her hip surgery and is steadily improving.

Charley Furgason: A fellow brother in Christ from the Bakersfield/Lake Isabella area is fighting cancer and is in his late 30's with a wife and two young

daughters. He's been battling his esophageal cancer for over a year, but now it has metastasized to his pancreas and liver. They're asking brethren everywhere for prayers and if possible any financial assistance. If you're able to help, you can send directly to Charley and his family at:

Charley Furgason
PO Box 9
Lake Isabella, CA 93240

Elders' Corner

- **Weekly bulletins** will be available after our morning worship service.
- **A cassette recorder/duplicator** that we used to record sermons is available in the back room along with a large amount of cassette tapes and file boxes to anyone who can use these items as we no longer have a use for them.
- **We have FREE New King James Bibles** (red letter edition) for any visitors who need one. Here's the CATCH: We would like the name, address & phone number of the recipient so that we can follow up and encourage them.
- **Elder meeting information** from Thursday's meeting and the financial report will be announced this evening.

Video Showing

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen." (Matt. 28:18-20, NKJV)

- Our congregation is striving to obey this command by beginning a new series of public showings of the DVD, "Why Are There So Many Churches?" Starting Tuesday 03/01/11 and again on Thursday 03/03/11 at 7:00 p.m.
- Following this, we will begin showing the DVD series, "Searching for Truth." Each week we will show another segment.
- Pick up a flyer to share with those who are searching for the truth.
- This effort is being advertised in the paper and on radio.
- This is our opportunity to evangelize others.

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