How To Be Cured of. . .
"THE PHARISEE SYNDROME"

Matthew 23:1-12
10-28-2018

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1 - 2

***Avoid "Pharisaical" Christianity!**

I. <u>PRACTICE</u> what you <u>PREACH</u> (v. 3-4)
(The Pharisees had good advice but were bad examples)

II. <u>EXAMINE</u> your <u>MOTIVES</u> (v. 5-10)
(The Pharisees impressed people but displeased God)

Don't pursue vain. . .

A. <u>Appearances</u> of <u>spirituality</u> (v. 5)

B. <u>Positions</u> of <u>pre-eminence</u> (v. 6)

C. <u>Titles</u> of <u>importance</u> (v. 7-10)

III. <u>HUMBLE</u> yourself and <u>SERVE</u> others (v. 11-12)
(The Pharisees exalted themselves but were abased by God)

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It's difficult to be sick. What's even worse is to be sick and to go to a hospital only to be treated by inept doctors who themselves are sick, ignorant, and disorganized (EX: Katie's visit to a Queens Hospital for stitches).

Eccl. 10:1 - *"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."*

Nothing is quite as disgusting as people who have a reputation for spiritual wisdom and honor to be inconsistent, hypocritical, and arrogant.

There is a sickness in the Body of Christ today. It's not the AIDS virus (Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome). Today I will call it "SAPS" - "The Scribe and Pharisee Syndrome."

Such a sickness "saps" Christianity of its power; it "saps" your testimony of its credibility; it "saps" you of your usefulness to the cause of Christ.

V. 1
"The multitudes and tot His disciples" -This lesson applies to both laymen and "clergy" alike.

Every one who seeks to serve the Lord needs to sit up and take notice of how to serve and how not to serve.

V. 2
The verb ***"sit"*** is middle voice in the Greek, which means they *"seated themselves in Moses' seat."* (cp. NASV). They made themselves substitute replacements for Moses.

They assumed a position of authority God never gave them. Many are in positions of spiritual authority today who were never "called" to it by God. They are self-appointed, self-ordained ministers (who for the supposed fame/glory/or "fortune" seized a position God didn't have for them).

***Avoid "Pharisaical" Christianity!**

I. PRACTICE what you PREACH (v. 3-4)
(The Pharisees had good advice but were bad examples)

V. 3
Jesus told them to . . . Do what they say, don't do what they do.

"Observe and do" - Guard the truth and practice it.

It is wrong to discredit a principle or position just because of the inconsistencies (or hypocrisy) of the ones who preached it (EX: the 1994 Pensacola pro-life murderer, an anti-abortionist who killed an abortion doctor).

Scriptural precept should always be followed even when the proponents of it are riddled with inconsistencies and personal failures.

What God says is still true and trustworthy even when the channel of communication is shady and suspect.

--Children, you should do the right your parents tell you even though they themselves don't do it (pray for them to practice what they preach).

--Members and friends, you should do the right you are fed from this pulpit even if you were to detect what seem to be flaws in my own character and conduct.

V. 4

These religious hucksters exploited the people. They treated them like "beasts of burden," loading them with ministry, religious works, and moral responsibilities that they would not lift a pinky to relieve.

Any preacher who cannot "roll up his sleeves" and work with the people even in the most menial tasks should not be in the ministry.

Some think they are too important to dirty themselves with what it takes to lead sheep and to set a practical example for them to follow (Note: Balance and priorities must not be neglected. God's ministers are not above any mundane task, but must not get side-tracked by it - Acts 6:1ff).

Don't ever ask someone else to do something that you yourself are unwilling to do.

Doctrine is supposed to produce duty.

Right teaching should be followed with right living.

(What set God's religion apart from all others was its practical application to life. It wasn't supposed to be theory or philosophy, but a moral code of ethics)

The most effective medium to use to make a striking impact on people is a visual aid. I can't think of a better visual aid than a real-life example (a sincere model).

"Most people would rather see a sermon than hear one!"

Set an example (model) for your family, co-workers, neighbors, etc.

Nothing is as compelling as a real, flesh & blood, true, authentic example.

Nothing is as sickening as someone who gives everyone else the medicine they need, but does not take it themselves.

Don't be all "lip" if you don't have a "life" to back it up!

"Your walk talks and your talk talks,
but your walk talks louder than your talk talks!"

II. EXAMINE your MOTIVES (v. 5-10)

(The Pharisees impressed people but displeased God)

V. 5

"All their works they do for to be seen of men" - Their sole reason, their driving motive, their only incentive for the good things they did was to catch the eye of men, to gain the attention of their peers, to impress people.

They could have won an "Academy award" for their talented acting, their pretence, their facade.

"All their works" - Every one of their religious deeds - the classes they taught, the worship they led, the giving, praying, fasting, etc. It was all a show, an act.

Why should we do right? Why should you obey God's Word?

Our ultimate motive ought to be God-centered not self-centered or man-centered.

The reason we do what we do must be: 1) to please Him and 2) to glorify Him, that His heart be filled with joy and that His honor be expressed to others.

Don't pursue vain. . .

A. Appearances of spirituality (v. 5)

"Phylactery" - "was a square leather box which contained four strips of parchment on which were written Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and Exodus 13:1-10. During prayer one was worn on the forehead between the eyebrows and another on the left arm close to the elbow. They were held in place by leather bands" (Ryrie note).

So as to attract more attention to themselves, they would tie larger than normal phylacteries to their foreheads and arms.

Instead of wearing a size 3, they would use a size 13!

The borders" - the fringes or tassels that hung from the hem of their garments were widened and lengthened so as to capture more attention to their spirituality.

These fringes were to remind the wearers of God's commands (like "tying a string around the finger," these tassels and cords of blue were to serve as a reminder of obedience to God's Word (SEE: Numbers 15:37-40).

Today, many Christians judge other Christians by how "spiritual" they look. They critique:
--hair length
--dress length and style
--no shaving legs, no make-up (Pentacostalism)

> --Note: Others go to opposite extremes; they strive to look worldly so as to cram their Christian liberty down the throats of those they view as "legalists."

Other appearances of spirituality people put on:

1) Deep, monotone, KJV English <u>prayers</u>, but not from the heart

2) Religious <u>lingo</u> (when around Christians their vocabulary changes drastically)

3) <u>Giving</u> to be noticed by men

B. Positions of pre-eminence (v. 6)

"Uppermost rooms" **-** places where the guests of ho nor would sit at a banquet.

"Chief seats" **-** chairs of importance. The larger seats where the important rabbis sat.

There are practical reasons why you shouldn't seek seats of pre-eminence. One is that you may be humiliated and told to take a lesser seat, whereas if you had taken the less important place and were asked to move up, you should be honored (Prov. 25:6-7 - *"Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen."*) (SEE: Luke 14:7-11)

The Pharisees thought too much of their own importance. With inflated egos and a desire to be known and popular they would seek positions of pre-eminence.

Honor is not something you get by grabbing it; it is bestowed on you by someone who thinks you are worthy! God knows whether or not we are worthy of honor. Let Him put it on the hearts of others to honor you; don't seek it!

C. Titles of importance (v. 7-10)

"In the markets" - out where the crowds gathered to shop.

They would love it when a crowd was gathered around them and someone would yell out, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" Their chest would dwell in pride and an aura of importance would inflate their ego.

"Rabbi" - an authoritative teacher of God's Word.

The only one who has a right to teach with independent authority is Christ! (Mt. 7:29).

The rest of us are in the same boat, on the same level; we have no authority of our own; but we interpret the authority of another -- the Word of Christ!

"Father" - not speaking of a parent, but of a "spiritual father," a man whom you are utterly depend on for spiritual guidance.

The only "spiritual Father" we have is in Heaven. We are spiritual children of God, not children of some human pope.

It is an abomination to call a priest "father" or to address the pope as "pope." (which is from the Latin *papa* meaning Daddy or Father). The believers' only pontiff is in Heaven!

"Paul referred to himself as a 'spiritual father' because he had begotten people through the Gospel (I Cor. 4:15). But he did not ask them to use that term when addressing him" (Wiersbe, p. 84).

"Masters" - An expert in spiritual matters, who gives unquestioned, authoritative leadership to followers (Note: Do you know what an "expert" is according to a etymological definition? *"Ex"* is a has been; and a *"spert"* is a drip under pressure!).

The only ultimate perfect leader we are to follow is Christ (I Cor. 11:1 - *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*)

It is to Christ we pledge total allegiance. Every "cult" is a "cult" because it follows without question the absolute authority of a human leader(s).

Many pursue theological training to have M.Div., Th.M., D.D., Th.D. printed after their name. Others covet honorary doctor's degrees (EX: William Carey's being called "Dr. Carey" by Alexander Duff).

III. <u>HUMBLE</u> yourself and <u>SERVE</u> others (v. 11-12)
(The Pharisees exalted themselves but were abased by God)

V. 11

True greatness (as God measures it) is determined by what type of servant you are to others.

It is not the one who is served who is great, but the one who serves.

The more people you serve, the greater your honor (hence, the government leader of England is called "The Prime Minister").

Don't make it your goal in life to have people wait on you, drop grapes in your mouth, and fan you. . . Get busy serving Christ by serving His children!

Do you have a servant's heart?

Jesus washed the disciples' feet (SEE: John 13:4-5, 12-17).

V. 12

"Whosoever" - God can humble <u>anybody</u>! (no one is too big for God to squash!)

One of the seven things God <u>hates</u> is a *"proud look"* (Prov. 6:17).

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

"The Lord will destroy the house of the proud" (Prov. 15:2)

--Ask Nebuchadnezzar (who boasted over Babylon) if God can abase (humble) the proud (Dan. 4)

--Ask Hezekiah (who boasted of his vast wealth) if God abases the proud (II Ki. 20:12-18; cp. II Chron. 32:25)

--Ask Uzziah (who usurped the role of priest) if God abases the proud (II Chron. 26:16-20)

--Ask Herod Agrippa if God abases the proud (Acts f12:20-23).

"Shall be exalted" - (passive) It is God who does the lifting up! Promotion is from Him. He is the best elevator.

"God resisteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble...Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:5-6).

If you "lift up yourself", such promotion is not real. Nothing is quite as cheap as someone who "toots his own horn."

Ps. 75:6-7 - *"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, But God is the judge: He putteth down one, nd setteth up another."*

Prov. 27:2 - *"Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."*

We must die to self promotion; die to the pursuit of fame (popularity), success (prosperity), etc. Only then can God raise us up.

CONCLUSION: