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The Gospel Without Religion

By Charles Pinkney

GWR 09

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"The Leaven of Pharisees "

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"Pharisees judge the externals, see only the outward forms and appearance of things, therefore they do not judge with righteous judgment (Isaiah Chapter 11)

Pharisees do not recognize or understand the Spiritual anointing, they contend with the anointing, using any argument to stop it.

Pharisees flaunt the status of their religious titles, which are used to "lord it over" the simple.

Pharisees expect privilege, power, status, and gain through their titles and leadership.

Pharisees forget the true nature of ministry: mercy, sharing and helping others.

Pharisees judge things which are from God to be evil and devilish.

"But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils." (Matthew 9:34) "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." (Matthew 12:24)

There is a class of religious people who know only the ritual, the letter and the doctrine of their institution. These individuals are quick to react to the person who comes with a doctrine or revelation that does not coincide with their own. They do not recognize the revelation of the Spirit of God and in fact do not even know God or his attributes. In the case of Jesus, they ascribed his anointed works to that of Lucifer.

Pharisees follow codes of legalism

"But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day." (Matthew 12:2) "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness."

(Luke 11:39) "But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Luke 11:42)

Conformity to religious rules or "legalism" marks the religious behavior of the Pharisees. Doctrines are judged right and correct because they follow *"the way of the fathers."* It is the tradition. Tradition is sacrosanct and can not be violated. Jesus saw past the tradition into the moral and spiritual foundations of God.

Pharisees vehemently oppose any they perceive to be contrary to their doctrine.

Pharisees set themselves to destroy those who differ with them.

"And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him."

(Mark 3:6) "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him." (Matthew 12:14)

Tolerance for another viewpoint not evident in the doctrine of Pharisees. We see the immediate response to opposition which threatened their power-base is that of reprisals, sanctions, or worse. It is dangerous to confront a religiously grounded person especially one who has a vested interest in the status-quo. No congregation wishes to be threatened in way which impacts their power base or the economic interests of their congregation.

The Pharisee's behavior is contagious

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

When there is no spiritual core in religious life everything done is based upon the accepted form, going along with the status-quo adhering to traditional behavior. Regardless of the times or era, once so conditioned it is very hard to break free. Jesus called the unyielding tradition-bound people of his day, *"children of hell."* (Matthew 23:15)

Pharisees hinder or prevent the acquisition of true faith

Mat 23:13 "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

Mat 23:15 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

Pharisees present themselves with pomp, pretense and self exaltation.

Mat 23:14 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

Pharisees miss the spiritual meaning of the word and the law.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matthew 23:23) "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." (Luke 11:39)

Those who are of the world and those who are connected with the vine of religion fail to hear Jesus' words and they fail to believe. Jesus told these religious persons that if they belonged to God they would hear and recognize that Jesus spoke for God. Jesus concluded that they did not belong to God but to their father the devil.

Pharisees do not follow the laws they teach; hypocrisy.

" - he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1)

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." (Matthew 23:25) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

(Matthew 23:27) "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." (Matthew 23:3)

Pharisees separate themselves from common people and sinners.

"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" (Mark 2:16)

"But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" (Luke 5:30) "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." (Luke 15:2)

Pharisees turn what should be a spiritual life into burdensome tasks.

"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matthew 23:4)

There are still religions today who bind their people with obligations and burdensome tasks. To fail at the task is to risk spiritual repercussion of God's wrath.

Pharisees see God formally and far off from man; have no knowledge nor experience of the intimacy of "son ship."

"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21)

To Pharisees the "status" of their ecclesiastical position is self exaltation and pride.

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

"And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him." (Luke 16:14)

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments," (Matthew 23:5)

"Pharisees judge the externals, see only the outward forms and appearance of things, therefore they do not judge with righteous judgment (Isaiah Chapter 11)

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." (Luke 17:20)

Righteous judgment is described in Isaiah Chapter 11. It states that Lord, the righteous Judge will not judge by the external evidence of the things which are seen by things revealed in the Spirit.

Pharisees do not recognize the anointing, they contend and compete with the anointing, using any available argument to stop it.

"The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." (John 8:13)

"Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." (John 11:57)

Any person who is spiritual in the midst of religious non spiritual people is at once suspect and accused of many kinds of evil. Whether by reason of jealousy or of fear that they might be exposed as spiritually deficient charlatans. In such situations, the true man or woman of God is singled out for persecution and eventually suffers legalistic reprisals from the priestly leadership.

Pharisees flaunt the status of their religious titles, which are used to "lord it over" the simple.

"And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." (read Matthew 23:7-10)

From these scriptures it can be interpreted that any names which exalt clergy or human leadership is unscriptural. Whether "Rabbi," "Master," "Father," "Excellence," "Eminence," "Your Grace," "Reverend" or "Pastor, " or any other.

The apostles forbid such obsequious fawning and we should not become so phony and egoistic as to require it. These kinds of men may be our brothers if they are believers but they are no more than a brother who shares the same testimony that, *"We have nothing that was not given to us"*.

Pharisees expect privilege, power, status, and gain through their titles and leadership.

"And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues," "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."

"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:6,8,9,12)

Clergy as a privileged class is assumed widely within contemporary tradition. Leadership, some presume, has the privilege of living in a kind of exalted manner, with lavish attention to their every need. Of course there are some poor churches who barely support their pastors and might well do more, many of the clergy class "lord it over" the parishioners essentially expecting a high standard of comfortable living to be supplied by the gratuities of others.

There is something about the picture of a fat, self indulgent preacher that the world does not trust. The Broadway musical production "Cabaret" typifies this view as it features one song which was called "Money." In it there is just such

a reference to a fat money-grabbing preacher. While fat and affluent business men seem perfectly Okay by worldly standards the world does not really want to see Christians among the materialistic and self indulgent. While I do not normally see the world as having much spiritual enlightenment, this is an interesting insight.

Pharisees forget the true nature of ministry: mercy, sharing and helping others.

"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Matthew 23:11,12)

The Kingdom of God is not about ourselves. The Kingdom of God is not about wealth or comfort though it would be good if want and suffering were banished. The Kingdom of God is about realizing a life where God is a reality and his presence is a continual comfort and strength to any of us in this world, regardless of our status or situation. God is a reality and his blessings are real and new each day. Those who know God are aware of this reality, those who know only religion are still waiting to connect to the real thing.

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