

YOU MIGHT BE A PHARISEE IF...

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June 1, 2008

INTRODUCTION:

- A. From Cain, in the beginning of the Bible, to the great beast of Revelation, the Bible is full of spiritual villains or just flat out bad people – People who lived evil lives or openly opposed the will of the Lord!**
1. Just the sound of their names bring negative thoughts – Cain, Pharaoh, Herod, Ahab, Jezebel, king Saul, Judas Iscariot, Jeroboam, Goliath, Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians...!
 2. Some of the greatest words of disapproval given by the Lord are given by associated people with some of these names! **(2 Kings 21:19-21; Hebrews 12:16; Jude 1:11)**
 3. None of us want to be associated with any of these people – It would mean we were enemies of God, opposing His cause, being hurtful to others, or living morally or doctrinally wrong lives
- B. Another one of those names we sometimes hear applied as a label is that of the Pharisees:**
1. I am sure at least some of us have been called a Pharisee before, or at least been told we were being too Pharisaical about something - This may come up when discussing the importance of authority, the necessity of baptism, or something like instrumental music in worship
 2. Phariseeism is certainly a negative thing, it's a danger all of us have to guard against; however, a very simple question needs to be answered, "What does it mean to be a Pharisee?"
 3. We've heard the "You might be a redneck if..." jokes – What about, "You might be a Pharisee if..."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PHARISAICAL?

- A. Some have misapplied the term "Pharisaical" to the wrong characteristics:**
1. You are not being Pharisaical just because you point out that another person is wrong! **(Passage)**
 - a. We're to withdraw from those who insist on walking disorderly, to discern between true teachers & false teachers, to correct those in error – This requires making judgments
 - b. Using an emotional tactic, some are quick to compare us to the Pharisee in the story of the Pharisee & Tax Collector – That's not about correcting, but pride & self-righteousness
 - c. If anyone points that we're in the wrong on something we must realize that neither their motivation or their approach determines if I am right or wrong! If they come in the worst of ways (even hypocritically) and I am wrong... I am still wrong & must change!
 2. You are not being Pharisaical just because you seek to obey all of God's law! **(Matthew 5:19-20)**
 - a. Jesus never condemned the Pharisees for their desire to get it right or their desire to obey God's law down to the tiniest details... The Pharisees problem was something else!
 - b. Sometimes people think being zealous to get the laws of God right or being careful not to add to or take away anything is Pharisaical! Not, it's about love! **(John 14:15)**
 - b. If this is the case consider the fact that it would also mean that some of the greatest men of faith were also being Pharisaical! Was Noah, Moses, Josiah, or Jesus Pharisaical?
 3. Also, recognizing that the road to salvation is a narrow road isn't a Pharisaical trait **(Matt 7:13-23)**
 - a. Throughout this section Jesus is emphasizing the narrowness of salvation – Not that it's impossible for all to be saved, but that very few choose the real path to salvation!
 - b. Jesus doesn't just say that the grossly immoral or those who refuse to become Christians will be lost... He even pictures those who seem very religious as being lost!
 - c. If someone accuses me of being Pharisaical because I point out their error or because I talk of the great number of lost but religious people... Jesus would also be Pharisaical!

B. What was it about the Pharisees that brought such a strong condemnation from Jesus? The best way to understand what their error was is to look at Jesus' rebuke of them in Matthew 23:

1. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for preaching great things but practicing very little! **(Matt 23:1-4)**
 - a. Their teaching wasn't totally off as we may think since Jesus was able to tell His disciples to observe whatever the Pharisees said told them to – The problem was in their lives!
 - b. Through their traditions and requirements they made life very difficult on others... but the standard & requirements they applied to others they would not place on themselves
 - c. Paul said this was a characteristic of Jews in general – They condemned the Gentiles for their idolatry & immorality while practicing basically the same thing! **(Rom 2:1-5)**
 - d. You want to make sure you aren't guilty of Phariseeism? Strive to practice what you preach! Don't expect of others what you don't expect of yourself!
2. He condemned them for practicing their righteousness gain man's praises **(Matthew 23:5-12)**
 - a. They did their religious things to be seen of men! When they served it wasn't from a love of their fellow man and when they worshipped it was not from their love of God!
 - b. It was their love of themselves! They lived in the lime-light and they loved it! They saw themselves as better than others so they expected men to praise and honor them!
 - c. They enlarged their phylacteries – They are traditionally small boxes that had some verses written on them (Ex 13:1-10; Dt. 6:4-9 & 11:13-21). Common people wore them on special occasions – Pharisees wore them all the time & made their boxes really big
 - d. A great example of this is how the Pharisees acted when they fasted **(Matt 6:16-18)**
 - e. There's a difference between the man who does good deeds publicly to glorify God & the one who does them to glorify himself! What's your motivation? **(Matt 5:16; 6:1-4)**
 - f. Another danger – We'd never dream of using the titles "Rabbi" or "Father" because of this passage... but sometimes Christians will do this with the term "brother"
3. They were wrong because they were illogical & inconsistent in applying God's law **(Matt 23:16-22)**
 - a. Talk about some major hair splitting! Why make such odd distinctions? At times it was based on their opinions & at times it was just to accommodate what they wanted
 - b. The Corban Rule illustrates this well – It was a special rule they came up with that allowed them to dedicate money to the temple to avoid properly caring for their parents... But guess who stands to benefit from this? The religious leaders do! **(Mark 7:7-13)**
 - c. Part of their inconsistency here is how they made rules and restrictions where God had not and lost all reason when it came to the laws of God **(John 9:13-16)**
4. Jesus condemned them because they neglected the weightier matters of the law **(Matt 23:23-24)**
 - a. Many will go to this passage to show that emphasizing every command of God & calling for authority in what we do, is being Pharisical – But Jesus doesn't say that is wrong, in fact, what Jesus says is they should've done those as well as the "weightier matters"
 - b. Imagine a person sitting down to a meal & removing a speck of dirt but ignoring a bug!
This is the Pharisees! They focused on the most finite but ignored the big commands
 - c. Why did they neglect these? Possibly because these are heart matters and their hearts were not in the right place. It also could've been because these weightier matters are not matters you can put an exact line on how much or how often they're done
 - d. The Scribes & Pharisees would go to great lengths to make a proselyte or to defend their concept of God's will, but they didn't have room to reach out to others! **(Matt 9:11)**

- e. If some Christians would spend as much time trying to build their faith, help the spiritually weak, or reach the lost as they did battling false doctrine the church would see great growth! Do we strive as much to do good as we do to avoid evil? **(James 2:27, 4:17)**
- 5. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because their righteousness was superficial **(Matt 23:25-28)**
 - a. With both of these illustrations we see they were really focused on looking good on the outside while on the inside they were full of corruption, sin, and immorality!
 - b. Their religion was only superficial – What faith they had did not change their heart! This is why Jesus said our righteousness must exceed theirs... Changes from the inside out!
 - c. This is why Jesus calls them “hypocrites” – It’s an old term that refers to an actor, someone who plays the part of another → Spiritually a hypocrite is someone who tries to make people believe they are something they aren’t or one who lives a double life
 - d. A person can fool other Christians, they can make their neighbors think they are the most religious people ever, but no one fools God! God knows our hearts! **(Luke 16:14-16)**
- 6. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because of their pride and self-righteousness **(Matt 23:29-36)**
 - a. They thought they were stronger than everyone else... Their great pride had blinded them!
 - b. They knew their ancestors had persecuted, even to the point of death, the prophets of the Lord... They thought if they were alive back then things would have been different!
 - c. It’s ironic... these words are spoken by Jesus to the very men who’d bring about His death! They’d finish filling up the cup of God’s wrath by killing the greatest Prophet of all!
 - d. It wouldn’t stop there – After His death they’d persecute the apostles and God’s people in general... This brought about the destruction of Jerusalem! **(Revelation 18:24)**
 - e. Self-righteousness & pride are attitudes that stink! Do we see ourselves as better than the lost? What if we didn’t have the teaching or examples we’ve had in our lives? Do we see our sins as no big deal but their sins as being gross & inexcusable? Have we shut off ourselves to people with struggles? Do we presume that if we were in their shoes we would be free from their struggles? That’s Phariseeism! **(Luke 18:11-12)**

C. Having observed some pretty negative things about them, they do have some positive characteristics:

- 1. Just because a group is wrong doctrinally, doesn’t mean we can’t learn good lessons from them!
 - a. In fact, I’d venture to say that it’s Pharisaical to refuse to see the good qualities they have!
 - b. Like the Mormons – If we all spent just half the effort that those guys do, in just the time we have available to us to use, I am sure we would see wonderful results of growth!
 - c. Remember, Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee... He was a Jew’s Jew! While Saul of Tarsus was doctrinally wrong the Lord saw commendable qualities that if simply channeled in the right direction would bring him to do great work in the kingdom! **(Phil 3:4-6)**
- 2. The Pharisees were to be commended for their love for & knowledge of God’s law **(Matt 23:3)**
- 3. The Pharisees were to be commended because of their zeal for converting people **(Matt 23:15)**
- 4. While their traditions and commandments of men took things too far, we should remember why they made those extra rules – To keep people from breaking God’s laws!
 - a. They understand that idolatry & breaking of the Sabbath day were some of the things that caused them to be carried into captivity & they did not want this to happen to them!
 - b. We’d do well to mimic this to a degree... Understanding the cost and consequences of sin we should do what it takes to keep ourselves from breaking God’s laws & principles!

"Elf - In this movie, Santa Clause is making his rounds one Christmas night and during a visit to an orphanage an orphan infant sneaks into Santa's sleigh and ends up riding all the way to the North Pole. The child is discovered, and after realizing that he was an orphan from the orphanage, the elves decide to adopt and raise the baby there at the North Pole. They dress him like an elf, treat him like an elf, and raise him like an elf. The more time passes, the more evident it becomes that he definitely is NOT an elf. One major clue is that he grows to be over six feet tall. With each passing year, everyone becomes more and more aware that he is not an elf, and no amount of artificial, outward elf-ness can make him truly an elf. Finally, realizing that he doesn't belong, he goes back to the real world to try to find his biological family, fit in, and become a normal person. As difficult as it was to try to be an elf, which he wasn't, it is just as difficult trying to be a normal person because he had been artificially shaped into a form of elfness, without truly being an elf. Though I have no clue how the movie ends, the previews I have seen show a person who is somewhere in-between, not fitting in anywhere. He is an "almost" elf. He is an "almost" human."

Armed with hidden cameras, a Dateline NBC program depicted what goes on behind the scenes at some automotive repair shops. It was incredible. A couple of the mechanics had no problem lying to potential customers. They went out of their way to create even mechanical problems. Now I don't want us to assume that they are all like this, but some of them are. When I was watching this show, I couldn't help but wonder what kind of a story they would uncover if they installed hidden cameras in the church, or better yet, in our homes. What would the secret tape look like if they also shot some film when churchgoers were in their cars & at work? Headline: Pretenders in the Pews!

One hot day when they had guests for dinner, a mother asked her four-year-old boy named Johnny to say the blessing for the meal. Johnny didn't really want to and complained, "Mom, I don't know what to say!" The mother sweetly replied, in front of her guests, "Oh, just say what you hear me say." Obediently, Johnny bowed his head and mumbled, "Oh Lord, why did I invite these people over on such a hot day?"