



BLINDSIDED BY SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Mask of Cleanliness:

Luke 11:37-41: ³⁷ When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. ³⁸ But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.

You can't always judge a book by its cover. *"But they do their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments."* (Matthew 23:5).

Everything the Pharisees' did was done to attract the approval and attention of others. The approval of God took a back seat. The Pharisees would dress distinctively in clothes that would symbolize their righteousness. It was more important that they appeared righteous to others than whether they were really righteous or not. In today's world they would be the ones to carefully watch the opinion polls and then try to do and say those things which would garner them the most respect. They would wear a red ribbon for AIDS awareness, pink for breast cancer or yellow for the troops. They would seek to be politically correct. They would turn true righteousness on its ear; ridicule those who seek to live by faith and heap congratulations on one another for their wonderful insight and tremendously good deeds. You've got to love the ribbons! We love to plaster ribbons on our cars, refrigerators etc. because it shows how sensitive we are-right? Let's face it, if you are aware of a cause and you don't have a ribbon to show it-you are a total loser-right...or are you? You see, some people will claim support for a cause with a ribbon and refuse to give a penny in tangible support. Then there are others that never display a ribbon but give substantial tangible support to a cause.

Who do you think God is more pleased with; the person who shows off the ribbons for all to see (Pharisees) and gives no tangible support, or the non-ribbon person that turned faith into action with financial support that no one was aware of but God?

Mask of Hypocrisy

Even so, you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:26). That pretty much says it all about the Pharisees. They did what they thought was necessary to convince others that they were righteous. This might also well translate into those members of the church today who go through whatever motions they must to satisfy what they think are the minimum requirements of faith, so that people will think pleasing God is at least somewhat important to them. Such a shameful attitude was unacceptable to Christ then, and it still is today.

How can one even think that Jesus will be pleased with offering Him the barest leftovers of our lives; offering what's left instead of what's right? Many of us have heard someone say, "I can't afford to tithe." The fact is, the person that believes they can't afford to tithe can't afford not to! *Malachi 3:10~¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

Mask of Elitism

Luke 11:43-52: ⁴³ "Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ "Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it." ⁴⁵ One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." ⁴⁶ Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. ⁴⁷ "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. ⁴⁸ So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' ⁵⁰ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. ⁵² "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

Ever known someone who felt they were entitled to special treatment simply because they have been with the company longer, been a Christian or been in the church longer; or had more years of formal education? Did this influence your opinion of them?

Do you think long-standing personal relationships in church are sometimes mistaken for cliques?

BRINGING IT HOME

Jesus says to "clean first that which is within the cup and platter." So what can we do to clean the inside? First we must figure out what is most important.

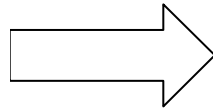
1 Peter 4:2: "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

We must change our hearts and repent of our past ways. Look truly at your heart. Are you serving God to do His will, for Him or are you putting on a show for others to see? Are you speaking of God and His word only around your Christian acquaintances and following the lusts of men the rest of the time? If you're having trouble deciding, try this. Next time you do a good deed, don't tell anyone about it. If it eats you up inside and you just have to tell people about it,

well then-Houston, we have a problem! Are you seeking the praise and approval of men by putting on a show? Some people feel a need to tell someone about every good deed they do. While it was a truly nice and giving act, why did they feel the need to tell someone about it? What are your motives for worshipping and serving God? We are encouraged to do God's Will for Him, to serve Him. Not to impress our neighbor, or to fit in a clique, or to build rapport with someone, or for status. Be willing to do His work regardless of the praise or the persecution.

Some people can come across as very self-righteous. Pastor Rob said, "There is absolutely nothing wrong with having an opinion. Differences will assuredly exist but opinion becomes elitism when you take the position that what you believe is best."

PHARISEE



Don't be this guy!

