

Accidental Pharisees – Are You A Christian in Word... Deed... or Both?

How long have you been a Christian? 1yr... 5... 10... 20... 30... 40... 50... 60...
Who has been a Christian the longest? Who has been one the shortest?

- Does the length of time, of being a Christian, make one better?
- Does educational status make one a better Christian than another?
- Does being extroverted & boisterous in one's faith make you better?
- Does status in the church make you a better Christian than others?

What makes for a true follower of Jesus... One who will one day hear those desirable words from Him, *“Well done, good and faithful servant”*?

- A true Christian is one in word! **Romans 10:9**
- A true Christian is one in deed! **James 2:26**
- A true Christian is one who, by faith, proclaims the gospel & lives by it!

Sometimes “church” people forget this truth... Both belief & practice matter!

- Just saying the right things... having the right answers... is not enough!
- Just being a good person... & living a moral life... is not enough either!
- We must believe the truth... & we must talk the talk... & walk the walk...

There was a group of people in the Bible that Jesus points out as an example of those who were falling short in these essential expressions of the faith...

And they aren't who we would have expected... They weren't the fishermen... the tax collectors... the new converts... the Gentiles... It was the Pharisees!

Who were the Pharisees? They were a prominent Jewish group of highly respected teachers and interpreters of the Law of God! They were:

- Experts in the Old Testament Scriptures
- Held to the core teachings of the Jewish faith
- Highly influential religious leaders
- Focused on holiness in everyday life

How is it that this group of people were the ones who Jesus confronted & rebuked the most while He walked on this earth?

They believed most of the right stuff... They taught most of the right stuff... They lived out most of the right stuff... So what was the problem?

Jesus saw beneath the surface of their declarations... He saw beyond their outward religious displays... He knew where their words, their lives, and the

true faith were not aligned!

The Pharisees were vocal... they were showy... they were elevated... & they knew it! The reason Jesus confronts & rebukes them more than anyone else is because they thought they were the ones who needed it the least!

Jesus knew better! And He not only wanted them to know better, but us too

The Pharisees get a bad rap... some for good reason... but I don't think every Pharisee became one just because they thought they were better than everyone else. I think many had the best of intentions... Just like many of us!

This sermon series is titled “Accidental Pharisees”. A title that I got from a book by the same name. This book challenged my views, not only of the Pharisees, but also of myself by revealing some of their tendencies in me!

We will be looking at only one primary Scripture passage for the 7 weeks in this series - Matthew 23. It reveals the 7 woes that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees!

But I want all of us to not just hear these words of Jesus being spoken to a religious group long ago, but words spoken as a warning to us today as well!

For Jesus doesn't just confront & rebuke the sins of “those other people”... He confronts us too - the religious... the church goers... the small group leaders... the consistory members... the pastor... & sometimes even more so!

Let's read together Matthew 23. Let's hear these 7 woes... And let us ask God to start softening our hearts to what He wants us to hear through them.

- 1) You are shutting the Kingdom of Heaven in the faces on men, and you yourselves are not entering in!
- 2) You are making converts, but you are making them worse than before!
- 3) You are leading people blindly, and into falsehood!
- 4) You are ignoring the weightier things & instead majoring in the minors!
- 5) You are outwardly clean, but inwardly corrupt!
- 6) You are whitewashed tombs!
- 7) You are honoring the prophets of old, but you are rejecting the truth!

There is great blessing in being a Christian for a long time... but there is also great risk of becoming like the Pharisees over time!

There is great blessing in acquiring knowledge & seeking to live a holy life... But knowledge can puff up & holy living can become self-righteousness!

Let's do some self-reflection & ask *“Are You talking to me when You say Pharisee?”*

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