

## Empty Christian Ritualism

“...*Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*” – Luke 12:1

Hypocrites are actors. They claim to be personally *free* from sin, while boldly offering this *liberty* to others, even though they are secretly in bondage to sin (2 Pet. 2:19). The true condition of the soul within is hidden underneath an outward “*form of godliness*” as they *profess* to *know* God (2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:16). Even the modern-day “Christian” religion can become a practice of empty ritualism if God isn’t in it! This happens when the religious rituals and traditions of modern Christianity are unquestionably revered. Literally, the people are afraid to question the merit of the things that they do! Therefore, God is forgotten in the process of things. The people are unknowingly putting merit in their outward practices of religion without looking inwardly to find reality with God through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 2:28-29).

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in *Spirit* and in *Truth*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in *Spirit* and in *Truth*.” - John 4:23-24

“Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me *the Fountain of Living Waters*, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” – Jer. 2:12-13 [John 7:37-39)

Hypocrites are persuasive. Due to a great show of religious ritualism, and with their many “*fair speeches*”, it is commonly believed that hypocrites are righteous men and women... but it’s all an act (Rom. 16:18). *Outwardly* they appear very righteous and pure while *inwardly* they are full of sin (Matt. 23:25-28). Naturally, in the theater of religious hypocrites, even the actors will forget that they are acting (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 7:21-23, John 16:2). The *conscience* will be *seared* as *deception* settles upon the congregation (Titus 1:16, Prov. 28:6). Christian to Christian, and congregation to congregation, the disease of hypocrisy spreads. Even a whole *generation* can be given over to the deceptions of empty religious ritualism (Prov. 30:12)!

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” – Prov. 30:12

Through all the activity the people come to forget that they aren’t right with God (Hos. 6:3-7). While doing what is *right* in their own eyes, they become oblivious to the fact that God isn’t in all their *righteous deeds* that they are proudly doing with ritualistic consistency (Prov. 14:12, Isa. 64:6)! The disciples of the LORD need to hear this message first of all: *Beware of the leaven of hypocrisy!*

“In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, *he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.” - Luke 12:1-3

In adulterous and backslidden generations, hypocrisy becomes so prevalent it becomes virtually indiscernible by the common people. The people who fall prey to it do not know what is deceiving them (Matt. 23:1-36).

The only remedy in a situation like this is exposing the hypocrisy with all boldness (Lk. 12:1-3). What did Jesus do? Jesus had a lot to say about *hypocrisy* (Matt. 23:1-35; John 7:7). So did all the Apostles and Prophets of the Bible throughout all time. They caused the people to question the merit of their religious rituals and traditions, and even the biblical ceremonies that were directly commanded of them by God, as long as the people weren't brought into the presence of God in the experience of righteousness in the soul in whatever they were doing. For, even though the people were void of the presence of God, they were ready to continue religiously observing **circumcision, sacrifices, washings, clean & unclean laws, assemblies, holy days, and incense offerings.**

**Circumcision** (Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:28-29)

**Sacrifices** (Isa. 1:11; Prov. 15:8, 21:27; Hos. 6:3-7, 14:2; Ps. 51:16-19)

**Washings** (Isa. 1:16, Titus 3:5, Jer. 4:14)

**Clean & Unclean Laws** (Isa. 1:16, Job 33:9, Job 15:14, Ps. 51:2, 5-7, Ps. 24:3-5, 73:1; Titus 3:5)

**Assemblies, Holy Days, & Incense** (Isa. 1:11-15)

Judaism cannot truly exist without the presence of Jehovah. There is no substitute for the presence of God. Christian activity without the real presence of Christ should be avoided like the plague. It is a dangerous disease of hypocrisy that spreads like *leaven* among the people. However, in order to discern the presence of hypocrisy in Christianity, we must see the great lengths that men are willing to go while coming short of true repentance from the heart, unto the establishing of real righteousness in the soul, by being in the presence of God.

A Desire to be Baptized in a profession of Faith (Lk. 3:7; Acts 8:13, 18-24)

Confessing Jesus as the Lord (Lk. 6:46; Matt. 7:21-23)

Seek the Lord as professing Believers (John 6:25-27; Prov. 1:28)

Participating in Discipleship as professing Believers (John 8:30-44)

Going to Church (Jer. 7:4; Matt. 24:1-2)

Willingness to hear Scriptural Teaching from the Bible (Matt. 23:2-3)

Hearing Preaching from a Man of God with some sense of enjoyment (Ezek. 33:31-32)

Inquiring after the truth in seeking the Counsel from Men of God while professing Obedience to their Leadership (Ezek. 14:1-11; Jer. 42:1-6)

Religiously Reading and Memorizing the Bible (Jer. 8:5-9; James 1:22)

Lifting Up and Spreading Out their Hands to God in Prayer (Isa. 1:15, Lam. 3:41)

Praying Long Prayers (Matt. 6:7, 23:14)

Crying Out to God in prayer (Hos. 7:13-16; Jer. 11:11, 14:12; Micah 3:4; Zech. 7:13)

Saying many lovely things to God in Prayer as if they are walking near to the LORD in sweet communion (Matt. 15:8; Isa. 29:13)

Rending their Garments in a show of strong desire (Joel 2:13; James 4:3)

Fasting and Mourning in a what appears to be a great show of dedication (Zech. 7:3-14, Isa. 58:3)

It is no wonder that so many people will argue with God on Judgment Day (Matt. 7:21-23, Lk. 13:23-30)! These godless souls go about trying to *establish their own righteousness* through religious activity instead of *submitting themselves* to the righteousness of God in Christ (Lk. 18:9-14, Rom. 10:1-3). Jesus Christ is the most essential ingredient to Christianity! Without Him we can do *nothing* (Jn. 15:5). Even now, the blood of Christ has the power to cleanse the soul and usher it into the presence of *the Living God* once and for all (Heb. 9:14).

Therefore, let every *alienated* hypocrite repent of these “*dead works*” and be reconciled to God through the power of the Gospel (Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:18, Col. 1:21).