

The Shocking Conversion of a Famous Religious Figure

“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.” – Matt. 23:13

It was foretold long ago that **hypocrisy** would plague the Church in the Last Days (2 Tim. 3:1-5, Jude 1:1-25). The most famous religious figures of Christianity in Africa and America are no different than the *Pharisees* (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They have a beautiful outward form of spirituality that deceives the masses, while the things that they are saying and doing in the name of God are without the love of the Father (2 Tim. 3:5; Lk. 18:9; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

“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. Thou blind *Pharisee*, cleanse first that which is **within** the cup and platter, that **the outside** of them may be clean also. 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. Even so ye also **outwardly appear** righteous unto men, but **within** ye are full of **hypocrisy** and iniquity.” – Matt. 23:25-28

God *looks* to **the heart** while the common man *looks* on **the outward appearance** (1 Sam. 16:7). Herein lies the problem. For, with a great show of confidence, especially in public *preaching* and *prayer*, the *Pharisees* were obviously a lot different than the average sinner in town, but according to the Scriptures they were still condemned before God (Lk. 18:9-14).

“Let them alone: they be **blind leaders of the blind**. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” - Mat 15:12-14

Saul of Tarsus was a famous religious figure of his day. As a highly educated *Pharisee* whom the people trusted (Acts 22:3, 23:6; Acts 7:54-60), it appeared outwardly that he was a very righteous man. The average person would have believed that he was a prayerful man because he lived a lifestyle of fasting and prayer, even praying long prayers (Lk. 18:12, Matt. 23:14). The average person would have believed he was a man of the Bible because he occupied the pulpits of the Churches of Judaism, called Moses’ seat, and preached directly from the word of God to the people (Matt. 23:2-4; John 5:39-47). He even traveled long distances to preach to sinners for the making of one disciple, thus giving the appearance that he loved the souls of men (Matt. 23:15).

“*But all their works they do for to be seen of men...*” – Matt. 23:5

According to the traditional understanding of the people concerning the righteousness and godliness of true religion, Saul of Tarsus was widely regarded as blameless (Php. 3:6, Isa. 29:13). He faithfully tithed of all that he possessed (Lk. 18:12, Matt. 23:23). He dressed right, acted the part, and sat in the seats of honor (Matt. 23:5-6). Then, suddenly, the man was knocked off his high horse of pride by the blinding light of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-18, 22:1-24, 26:1-32)! In one moment of time, this famous religious figure realized that he was a lost sinner, and a hypocrite, and then he fasted and prayed for three days with great mourning over his sins (Acts 9:9). Thereafter, upon being gloriously converted to Christ in truth, he arose and proclaimed the experience of salvation to others by the power of the Gospel! As a result, he suffered great persecution. Nevertheless, the beauty of Christ in salvation was so glorious, he regarded anything and everything else as dung in comparison to having a real relationship with God through Christ.

“But what things were **gain** to me, those I **counted** loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but **loss** for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the **loss** of all things, and do count them but **dung**, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” – Php. 3:7-10

Sadly, most people are so ignorant of the Bible, they don't know they are following a religious hypocrite. They don't know they are following a blind leader of the blind on the broad way to hell (Matt. 7:12-14). They are still just going through the motions without any true love for God! Things in this generation might change if men and women pick up the Bible and read it for themselves with trembling, humbling themselves to God in truth (Isa. 66:1-2; Isa. 57:15).