
Words of Truth

Outward Appearance Doesn't Make One Faithful

By: Brian A. Yeager

Jesus was speaking to a multitude and said the following concerning some hypocrites: *“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”* (Matthew 23:25-28).

The individuals that Jesus was exposing worked purposefully to appear righteous in the sight of others (Matthew 23:2-6). Think about the Scriptures we have read up to this point. You have people that look the part of the righteous, but they are not righteous. You have individuals that go as far as wearing certain clothing to appear righteous. Yet, again, they are not righteous. In earlier lessons of our Lord, while He walked in the flesh on this earth, He spoke of individuals who did religious acts just to be seen doing them to impress others (Matthew 6:1-18).

What we have covered thus far establishes that the problem of fake righteousness is something that has been around for a very long time. We have seen already that some individuals will go to great lengths to appear to be righteous when they really are not. Keeping up appearances is the goal of fake, **un**righteous individuals. There is a point to consider that we have not addressed yet. That point is, these individuals that fake righteousness are trying to impress people. Trying to impress people is the great flaw of the person trying to outwardly appear faithful when they are really not.

There Is A Huge Flaw In The Idea Of Impressing Men

The Lord said: *“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15). Stop and think about what you just read within the topic of our study. If the goal of a fake individual is to impress people, isn't the goal itself the biggest problem? So what if you do appear righteous before people? What have you gained?

If you are thinking of doing things to be impressive in the sight of men that goal is going to control your actions. In fact, that goal will keep you from doing the right things in the sight of God. We see this in the following: *“While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying*

of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:36-43).

So, you try to impress people. You keep up appearances. This goal has gotten you to a point wherein you act or choose not to act based upon what other people would think of your actions. What have you done?

So, You've Made It To Heaven In The Minds Of Men...

Who is going to judge you (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:28-29, Romans 14:11-12, and II Corinthians 5:10)? Can you serve the pleasures of man and have that be the standard that you live by to please God (Galatians 1:10)? What standard will judge you (John 12:48)? After using the Scriptures to answer those questions, what good have you found in seeking the approval of men or women in this world? NONE!

God tells us not to conform to this world (Romans 12:1-3). God tells us that the whole world is wicked (I John 5:19). God tells us not to love the world or the things of the world (I John 2:15-17). God tells us that the course of this world is one we are to leave behind when we become Christians (Ephesians 2:1-10 and Ephesians 4:17-32). Jesus' prayer to our Father in Heaven included His desire that His disciples be in the world, but not of the world (John 17:1-26). The world is not the way to Heaven (John 14:6). Therefore, if you have made it to heaven in the sight of sinful men you have assuredly not done that which is pleasing to God. This is true even if you have "appeared righteous".

Even If You Have Appeared Righteous

God doesn't look on us the way man does (I Samuel 16:7). You can wear your nice suit or dress. You can have your Bible highlighted. You can comment in classes. You can be capable of quoting many Scriptures from memory for others to hear. You can say the perfect prayers that others may hear. The Lord looks deeper than all of those outward things (Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Hebrews 4:13). Thus, even if you have fooled all the people around you by the best of outward appearances, that doesn't make you righteous!

Conclusion

Getting your life right to spend eternity in Heaven comes down to you really being righteous rather than just appearing as such (Matthew 13:37-43). We do not have time to keep up appearances. It is hard enough to be saved when you are really living righteously (I Peter 4:17-19). What makes you faithful is actually being such (Matthew 24:42-46)!

Milkshakes

How Do We Know Who Is Faithful?

By: Brian A. Yeager

There are always going to be unfaithful people who try to appear faithful when they really are not (Mark 12:38-40 and Galatians 2:1-5). We see in the Scriptures that these individuals can come from within or from the outside of the congregation (Acts 20:28-31). Either way, those whom pretend to be faithful are sneaky (Jude 1:4). These sneaky individuals will go to great lengths to pretend to be people they really are not (II Corinthians 11:13-15). We are taught of God to expose and avoid such individuals (Romans 16:17-18). However, how can we figure out who is faithful and who is not to take the right actions?

We can start with the simple answer. Jesus, when identifying who His brethren are, said this: *“There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! **For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother**”* (Mark 3:31-35).

It would be so very nice if knowing faithful brethren came down to just examining whether or not they are doing the will of God when we are around them. It's not that simple though. The unfaithful know how to hide in plain sight. Take Judas for example. When Jesus exposed Judas, none of the disciples were aware of anything that had been going on (Matthew 26:19-25). They had missed that Judas had long been sinning right under their noses (John 12:1-6). Judas appeared righteous. Yet, he was fully hidden and only Jesus was aware of what he was really up to. Jesus had an advantage that none of us do (John 2:24-25). So, how can we know if there is a Judas among us?

I should begin by saying we will not always be able to know whom among us is faithful or not (I Timothy 5:24-25). Having said that, we are given a tool to identify most of those whom call themselves our brethren. Read the following CAREFULLY: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. **Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them**”* (Matthew 7:15-20).

It is not works that weed out the unfaithful from the faithful. A sinner can do some “good works” (i.e. Luke 6:33). What you have to inspect, as we have just read, is the fruit of the work that individuals do. This takes time. This takes biblical knowledge and spiritual thinking (cf. Hebrews 5:12-14). We can, with some level of confidence, identify faithful brethren. They will be proven and their fruit will show such. It may not be so easy to find the fakes. They learn to hide effectively. However, faithful brethren will shine forth through their righteous spiritual fruit (cf. Galatians 5:16-26).