

The Problems With Religious Conservatives

Introduction

Let us look at a few passages that deal with the conservative religious leaders of Jesus' day and see what light the inspired Word of God can shed on this subject. Let us agree with Paul in Romans 3:4: "Let God be true, but every man a liar!"

I. Mark 7:6-13

A. The Pharisees were hypocrites who only gave lip service to God. (vs. 6)

1. Rather than teach the fear of God they taught the fear of men's precepts (Isa 29:13).
2. They stressed the tithing of herbs but overlooked judgment and the love of God (Luke 11:42).
3. They looked like God's people, even said kind things, but they did not do what was taught (Eze 33:31).
4. Their deeds demonstrated that many were not even God's children (John 8:41-42, 54-55).

B. The Pharisees were hypocrites whose "conservatism" nullified God's worship. (vs. 7-8)

1. Think about the order in which this occurs:
 - a) God's commandments are taught alongside of a man-made "help" to keep God's commandment, in this case washing dishes for ceremonial holiness.
 - b) This "aid", continued over time, becomes a tradition.
 - c) The tradition eventually supplants the actual God given commandment.
 - d) Instead of being a people whose hearts and lives were morally and spiritually separated to the LORD they had become obsessed about having clean hands before they ate.
 - e) An outward show replaced the inward reality that God was seeking (see A.3. above).
2. Jesus taught that corruption comes from inside, not outside, man, from his heart, not what he eats (Matt 15:10-20; Luke 11:38-39).
3. A further example of the nullifying of God's intent is seen when Jesus healed on the Sabbath (John 7:21-24).
 - a) The lesson is don't judge based on appearance but according to right judgment.
 - b) Don't judge by the letter, but by the spirit of the law.
4. God is very specific about His commandments. We are not to modify them (adding to or taking from) in any way (Deu 12:32; 4:2; Pro 30:6; Rev 22:18-19).
5. Teaching anything other than God's commandments in His name empties that activity of spiritual value in God's eyes (Matt 15:9).
6. The Holy Spirit is very specific on the source of such teaching and it is the devil (1 Tim 4:1).

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C. For all their show of humility, the Pharisees were arrogant hypocrites who rejected God's ways. (vs. 9-13)

1. Example: Corban
 - a) Someone would set aside their property for the Temple but continue to enjoy its use.
 - b) When asked by their parents for help, they would say that they couldn't because their property was the Temple's property, not theirs.
2. Consider the arrogance of setting up a means to "honor" God by dishonoring His plain intent that children should care for their parents!
3. Paul warned of belly worshippers whose "good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom 16:18; cp 2 Pet 2:3).
4. Note that Jesus not only identified this practice, but "**many such like things do ye.**" There were many other means by which the Pharisees would give an outward show of nobility and holiness while rejecting God's commandments.

D. Summary points

1. Beware of those insisting on man-made rules instead of God's word.
2. Don't judge by appearances, but, by careful consideration, make appropriate decisions.
3. Noble sounding reasons, not based squarely on the Bible, hide a rebellious heart.

II. Luke 16:15

A. Men seek to justify themselves before others.

1. Men are quick to proclaim their own righteousness (Pro 20:6).
2. Men applaud self-promotion (Ps 49:18).
3. Even a righteous Job had to be rebuked for this by young Elihu (Job 32:2).
4. Jesus addressed those who thought themselves righteous and despised others. Who does He use for His example? A Pharisee (Luke 18:9-11).
 - a) To God, these men are an irritant, like smoke up the nose (Isa 65:5).
 - b) These same men will cast out true saints and say they are doing it for God's glory (Isa 66:5).
5. Rather than accept correction, these men will ask raise questions, seeking to justify themselves (Luke 10:29).

B. What man naturally esteems, God hates.

1. The way that seems right to man is the way of death (Pro 14:12; 16:25).
2. Jesus exhorted His disciples to enter the narrow way; the broad way to destruction is traveled by many (Matt 7:13-14).
3. Always remember man's natural state (Eph 2:1-3):
 - a) Dead in sins (1)
 - b) Walking with the devil (2)
 - c) With a lifestyle that fulfills the lusts of the flesh and mind (3a)
 - d) Showing the nature of a child of wrath (3b).

C. Summary points

1. The desire to justify yourself rather than submit to God invites His anger.
2. Majorities are wrong because God hates what most men like.

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III. John 9:15-34

A. Verse commentary:

1. He truthfully testifies to the miracle that Jesus did (9:15).
2. Because the miracle is done on the Sabbath day, contrary to their interpretation of Scripture, the Pharisees are divided over it (9:16).
3. Rather than consider a change in their doctrinal view, they question the man healed on what he thinks about Jesus (9:17).
4. Because the answer calls their views into question (he says Jesus is a prophet of God), they question whether the man was truly born blind at all (9:18a).
5. The Pharisees seek to interrogate and intimidate his parents, but this does not work out as they confirm his previous blindness (9:18b-23).
6. The Pharisees then try to intimidate the man himself by pointing out their agreed conclusion: Jesus has to be a sinner (9:24).
7. When he continues to stick to his testimony, they question him again, hoping to find a discrepancy in his accounts (9:25-26).
8. The man understands their intentions and throws the issue back into their face with a challenging question: do you want to hear more so you can follow Him like I want to do (9:27)?
9. The Pharisees claim Moses as their teacher and revile the man and Jesus (9:28-29).
10. Rather than address his well reasoned answer on Jesus' status as a prophet from God (9:30-33), they cast him out of the synagogue (9:34).

B. Analysis:

1. Men can be studied in the Bible and knowledgeable about its contents but grossly ignorant of what it really teaches.
2. The first sign of rebellion is the desire to question and not consider that you can be wrong.
 - a) The Pharisees questioned the facts presented.
 - b) The Pharisees questioned the personalities involved.
 - c) The Pharisees questioned the motives of the witnesses.
 - d) Notice carefully the difference that truth makes to a convert vs. a conceited religious bigot. Vs. 27 "I have told you already, and ye did not hear."
 - e) Continual questions are a form of attack and a sign of unbelief.
3. Appeals to authorities, groups of men and attempts to intimidate based on those appeals are signs of error, not truth seeking.
4. The use of personal attacks and rejection rather than discussion of the Scriptures shows the arrogance of a closed mind in the wrong.

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IV. Summary and take home points

- A. Beware of those insisting on man-made rules instead of God's word.
 - 1. From man's side, man-made rules crowd out God's commandments.
 - 2. From God's side, man-made rules nullify His commandments.
 - 3. We are to be doers and not just hearers of the Word, showing true religion in our lives (Jam 1:22-27).
- B. Don't judge by appearances, but by careful consideration make good, appropriate, godly decisions.
- C. Noble sounding reasons for ideas and practices that are not based squarely on the Bible hide a proud and rebellious heart.
- D. Most men will justify themselves rather than submit to God, and so invite His wrath.
- E. Majorities are wrong. God hates what the majority likes.
- F. The higher the religious education the greater the tendency to spiritual ignorance, pride and rebellion.
- G. The nature of a question reveals the intent of the heart:
 - 1. Foolish questions indicate:
 - a) At best ignorance
 - b) At worst rebellion.
 - 2. Continual questioning reveals a scorner.
 - 3. Questions from an obedient hearer reveal a seeking saint.
 - 4. Let us be seeking saints that believe and worship Jesus!
- H. The use of anything (such as appeals to authority, intimidation, attacking personalities) rather than honest discussion of book, chapter and verse, reveals a closed mind that hates and rejects the truth.